Heart Treasure

~ by ~

Oliver Heywood

(1629 - 1702)

OLIVER HEYWOOD
(1629-1702)

As a young child, Heywood expressed an earnest desire to be a good minister. He went to Cambridge in 1647, studying diligently. Upon completing his Bachelor's degree, he took a pastorate in Coley, England, in November, 1650.

One of the ejected ministers of 1662, Heywood was often prosecuted and harassed. Twice excommunicated for refusing to take oaths in favor of the Church of England, he afterward limited his preaching to small parties in his own house. He was imprisoned often for preaching.

A zealous preacher, he recorded in his diary that in 1681 he preached 150 times (besides his Sunday work), kept 50 days of fasting and prayer, and travelled 1400 miles in service to Christ. He died on May 4, 1702.

In addition to this volume, Heywood wrote many practical treatises. Among them are *Closet Prayer*, *Life in God's Favor*, and *Family Altar*. His works were printed in 5 volumes in 1825. A re-issue of that reprint is pending.

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HEART TREASURE;

OR

The Furniture of a Holy Soul.

BY REV. OLIVER HEYWOOD.

1666.

REVISED AND EDITED
BY GEORGE B. IDE, D.D.

Soli Deo Gloria Publications
3505 5th Avenue
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

ISBN 1-877611-04-2

Editor's Preface.

The author of the following work being comparatively little known in this country, a brief notice of his life and character may not be unacceptable to the reader.

The Rev. Oliver Heywood was the second son of Richard and Alice Heywood, and was born March, 1629, in the parish of Bolton, Lancashire, England. Both his parents were sincere and earnest Christians. His mother, especially, appears to have been not only devotedly pious, but highly intelligent, and well qualified to instruct and guide his youthful mind. To her instrumentality he ascribes his first religious impressions. From his earliest childhood, it was her constant endeavor to unfold to him the great truths of the Gospel, to awaken him to a sense of his lost state as a sinner, and to direct him to Christ as the only source of hope and salvation. The neighborhood, in which he was brought up, was also at that

time distinguished for its Christian privileges, and for the number and zeal of those who professed the religion of Jesus. Speaking of his birth-place, he observes; "It hath long been famous for glorious professors of the Gospel, and powerful preachers; and I take it as one of the great mercies of my life, that my nativity was in Goshen, under the star of Jacob's special influence." The means of instruction, which he thus enjoyed, were made effectual, by the blessing of God, in bringing him to a saving knowledge of the truth. So early, indeed, was he the subject of serious impressions, that he was never able to recollect when they first commenced, or to determine the precise period when the work of the Spirit within him issued in vital conversion. At the age of fourteen years, however, his religious principles and feelings had become so confirmed, that he began to take part in the exercises of certain young Christians, who were accustomed to meet during the winter evenings for social conference and prayer; and soon after, he publicly declared his faith in Christ, by receiving the Lord's Supper in the church at Bolton. This was in the days of the Commonwealth, when a large proportion of the churches in England were organized according to the Presbyterian model. Of this order was the church with which our

author now became connected; and to the doctrines and discipline of moderate Presbyterianism be continued to adhere during his life.

Not long after his public profession of religion, his mind began to be deeply exercised on the subject of preaching the Gospel. He felt such a strong and irrepressible desire to proclaim the tidings of mercy to his perishing fellow men, that he was constrained to regard it as an inward call of the Spirit to this high and responsible service. Accordingly, with the advice and consent of his parents and friends, he resolved to devote himself to the sacred work of the ministry. With this view, having passed through the requisite preparatory studies, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, July 9th, 1647, when he was about eighteen years of age. During his residence in the University, although he neglected none of the prescribed means of mental development, he was yet especially assiduous in the care of his heart, and the cultivation of practical godliness. He formed a close intimacy with several pious students, who, like himself, afterwards became distinguished for their ministerial usefulness, and often met with them for mutual edification in spiritual and experimental religion. In this manner, while acquiring a store of human knowledge, he laid the foundation of that deep personal

piety, that profound acquaintance with divine truth, and that eminent success in its proclamation, for which he was subsequently so celebrated.

Having remained in the University until he received his degree of Bachelor of Arts, he returned to his father's house, to await the indications of Providence in regard to his future sphere of labor. He continued to reside with his parents for about half a year, pursuing his studies, and preaching, as occasion offered, to the ignorant and destitute in the surrounding hamlets. At the expiration of this period, he received a unanimous invitation from the congregation of Coley Chapel, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, to become their pastor. After much doubt and hesitancy, and many days spent in earnest prayer and self-examination, he concluded to accept the invitation, and was, in due time, regularly ordained to the pastoral office, according to the Presbyterian form. In this field, he labored for several years with great energy, acceptance, and success. Under his ministrations believers were instructed, edified, and made more spiritual; and large numbers of the impenitent were awakened and converted.

But while he was thus actively engaged in this work, and witnessing many proofs of the Divine blessing, the Commonwealth came to an end, and Charles

II. ascended the throne of England. This was soon followed by the restoration of Episcopacy, and the passage of the act of Uniformity, by which all ministers were required to conform to the doctrines, ceremonies, and practices of the Established Church, on pain of expulsion from their charges. By this intolerant and tyrannical measure, more than two thousand of the best and most faithful ministers of England were ejected from their livings, and driven from their people, because they would not violate their consciences by complying with what they believed to be contrary to the word of God. In this noble band of Nonconformists Mr. Heywood was included. Refusing to yield to the arrogant demands of prelatical authority, he was deposed from his office, and commanded to preach no more. And because he still continued, in private houses, and wherever opportunity was afforded, to teach the neglected people who were left as sheep without a shepherd, he was cited before the Bishops' court, heavily fined, and publicly excommunicated. To the Act of Uniformity succeeded, in a short time, what was denominated the Five Mile Act, which prohibited Nonconformist ministers, except in passing upon the road, from coming within five miles of any parish where they had acted as ministers, or within five

miles of any city, corporate town, or borough, under a penalty of forty pounds for every such offence. But all these efforts of arbitrary power could not silence this devoted servant of God. Wandering from place to place, among the mountains, in retired villages, in obscure and secluded neighborhoods, he persevered in proclaiming the message of his Master. His privations and sufferings were very great. Frequently he was so closely beset by the minions of the law, that he could visit his home only in the night. His goods were seized and carried off by the sheriff. Once he was arrested, and confined as a close prisoner in York Castle for twelve months. His means of subsistence were cut off, and he was often on the verge of extreme want. But Providence constantly interposed in his behalf, and raised up friends to succor him in every emergency. The houses of the pious were every where open for his reception and entertainment. Wherever he went he preached, and wherever he preached multitudes flocked to hear him. Thus, notwithstanding the severity of the legal prohibitions, and notwithstanding the vigilance of his persecutors, who hunted him from village to village with sleepless pertinacity, he continued, for more than twenty years, to publish the word of life among the destitute population around him. In no

period of his life, perhaps, was he more useful. He was a great blessing to the scattered people of God in this hour of darkness; and, through his instrumentality, very many of the ignorant and thoughtless were led to embrace the Saviour.

After the death of Charles, and the accession of James II., the oppressive enactments against the Nonconformists were repealed, and liberty of conscience partially restored. Mr. Heywood, being once more allowed the free exercise of his ministerial functions, built a chapel, and collected a congregation at Northowram, in the vicinity of his former field of labor. Here he remained as pastor until his decease. But though he was now settled over a regular charge, yet, during the long season of his ejectment, he had become so attached to itinerant work, that he never afterwards laid it aside. While statedly ministering to his own people on the Sabbath, he spent a large portion of the week in missionary labors among the destitute. From a statement of his biographer it appears, that principally during the last seventeen years of his life, besides his regular work on the Lord's day, he preached on week days more than 3000 Sermons, and travelled in preaching excursions more than 30,000 miles. And his labors were as eminently blessed as they were abundant. Many thousand

souls, it has been computed, were brought, through his means, to a saving knowledge of Christ. So powerful and lasting, indeed, was the impression produced by his ministry, that although nearly two centuries have since passed away, his memory is still reverently cherished through all the region over which he once scattered "the seed of the kingdom." Thus toiling incessantly in his Master's service to the last, he died, full of hope and peace, May 4th, 1702, in the seventy-third year of his age, and fifty-second of his stated ministry.

Mr. Heywood was twice married. His first wife was Miss Elizabeth, daughter of Rev. John Angier, a distinguished minister at Denton. By her he had two sons, John and Eliezer, both of whom became useful ministers of the gospel. After six years of great domestic happiness, she was removed from him by death. His second wife was Miss Abigail Crompton, of Breightmet, near Bolton. She proved a faithful and affectionate companion, and contributed greatly to his support and comfort during the harassing persecutions to which he was subjected.

Our author published, at different times, several valuable treatises, on religious subjects. In 1827 these were collected and reprinted in five volumes 8vo, with an extended memoir of his life, labors, and

sufferings. The work now reissued was the earliest of his publications. It was written while he was an exile from his home, fleeing from hamlet to hamlet to escape the blood-hounds of a persecuting Hierarchy; and, as might be expected, it is richly fraught with those precious truths, which formed the consolation of his own heart amidst his wanderings and trials. In revising it, the editor has deemed it expedient so to modify the language as to render the work more generally useful to our own times. Some change has also been made in the arrangement of subjects. The part which treats of Meditation, appeared originally in the form of an Appendix. It is now incorporated into the body of the book, with such alterations and additions as seemed necessary to adjust it to its new position. Here and there, too, a paragraph has been inserted to improve the connection, or greater expansion given to a thought too briefly stated. With these exceptions, the ideas are precisely the same as in the original work. While, in the mere choice of words, and structure of sentences, the editor has felt himself at liberty to make any changes which in his judgment appeared desirable, he has endeavored scrupulously to preserve the main scope and spirit of the author. Should any lover of antique phraseology complain of the freedom which he has thus taken, he can only say,

that his object has not been to gratify the curious, but to benefit the Christian Public at large. And he is persuaded that, to the mass of readers, the book will be far more acceptable in a form of expression to which they are accustomed, than if clothed in the obsolete garb of by-gone centuries.

The work has never before been issued in a form adapted to general circulation; and it is now most earnestly commended to the devout perusal and study of the children of God. It contains nothing of a denominational character. It is not controversial; nor is it doctrinal, abstractly considered. It deals wholly with those great topics of vital religion, in which Christians of every name are alike interested. And its exhibition of these topics is marked by a depth of pious feeling, and an experimental knowledge of the workings of grace in the soul, very seldom to be found. It may not, indeed, possess all that logical analysis, and that close consecutiveness of thought, by which more modern writings are characterized; but it possesses, what many modern writings lack—eminent spirituality, and a thoroughly evangelical tone. In these respects, it is worthy to take its place by the side of the devout treatises of Bunyan, and Flavel, and Baxter. Works of this description are greatly needed at the present day, when, amidst

the rush of events, and the constant calls to outward activity, there is a strong tendency to neglect the culti vation of inward holiness. The editor has found the labor, which he has bestowed on the book, more than compensated by the good which it has done his own soul. And it is his earnest prayer and hope that it may prove equally instructive and quickening to all into whose hands it shall come.

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HEART-TREASURE.

A GOOD MAN, OUT OF THE GOOD TREASURE OF THE HEART, BRINGETH FORTH GOOD THINGS.—MATT. XII. 35.

Our Divine Teacher, like a skillful alchemist, extracts the pure gold of wholesome doctrine from common objects and occurrences. From material water, He discourses on the spiritual water of life. From natural bread, He ascends to soul-nourishing conferences on His own flesh and blood, that living Bread which came down from heaven. Passing through vineyards, He improves the opportunity to speak of Himself as the true Vine, and of those saints that are really grafted into Him, and bring forth corresponding fruit. Thus also, in my text, he takes an occasion of uttering precious medicinal truths, from the poisonous blasphemies of the Scribes and Pharisees. He had just cast out a blind and dumb devil. This glorious miracle produced very different effects on different individuals. On the person possessed, it wrought soundness; on the people, amazement; on the Pharisees, madness and blasphemy, insomuch that they charge God himself with imposture. To

these last our Lord directs the discourse in which the text occurs. He refutes their unfounded calumny by clear arguments, demonstrating His divine power in the miracle. He exposes, moreover, the heinous criminality of the slander; and exhorts them to repentance, in the most earnest and solemn manner; urging them to conceive more correctly of divine works, and to speak of them more reverently; since for every idle, much more blasphemous expression, they must give account in the day of judgment.

In the course of this exhortation, He shows that thoughts are the first-born of the heart, the fountain from which all outward expressions flow. Words are but the echo of the language of the heart. There may be much in the heart which is never uttered by the lips; but nothing can fall from the latter which has not its origin in the former; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." This He illustrates by the metaphor of a treasure laid up in the heart, from which good and evil men bring forth respectively good and evil things. To the first part of this similitude alone—the heart-treasure of the good man—the present examination relates. A brief explanation of the terms in which it is expressed, may assist in forming a correct view of its import.

This treasure is described as the property of a

good man. In an absolute sense, "there is none good but God." He alone possesses original, essential, independent, perfect goodness. But in a lower signification of the term, the Scriptures denominate men good, who, through the application of atoning blood, and by the renewing influence of the Divine Spirit, have become imbued with the principles of vital godliness, and exhibit them in their temper and conduct. Thus it is said of Barnabas, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith." It is in this latter sense that the expression is employed in the text.

The treasure is represented as itself *good*. The word, treasure, is metaphorical, and refers to the husbandman and tradesman accumulating in store what must be used in aftertimes; or to provision laid up for the whole year by the mistress of a household. It denotes the supply of holy principles and affections with which the mind of a true believer is replenished, and which are ready to be called into exercise as occasion may demand. And it is designated as *good*, to mark its opposition to the "treasures of wickedness"—the depravity and pollution of irreligious men.

It is a treasure of *the heart*. The heart is the mainspring of human conduct. As the sun moves and guides all the spheres of heaven; so does this little thing in the little world of man animate all

his operations. By heart I mean the rational soul, with all its faculties of understanding, memory, will, and affection, which constitute the chief and noblest part of man. The heart is the seat of love and of hatred, of joy and of sorrow, of all that is excellent and of all that is corrupt in human character; and the heart of a Christian, purified and furnished from above, is rendered a depository of the choicest treasures—a cabinet of jewels most rare and precious.

From this good treasure the good man *brings forth good things.* He employs and dispenses the holy fund within him, in suitable communications, for the comfort of his own soul, and the benefit of others. This is drawing off the fountain into several channels; the carrying out the principles of grace into practice; the exercise and improvement of what has been laid up; the trading with the talent, required of every soul that hopes for the approval of Christ at the last day. And these communications are *good;* good spiritually; good in their matter, manner, and end; pleasing to God, profitable to man, and comforting to him by whom they are made. They are healthful and fertilizing streams, flowing from the spring of true grace in the heart, through the banks and bounds of the divine commands, to the infinite ocean of God's glory.

The sum of all, then, is, that the character and conduct of every man will be in strict accordance with the state of his heart. We judge of the heart by outward acts; but God judges of outward acts by the inward temper. Hence there is great truth in that saying of Luther, that "good works do not make good men, but they must first be made good men, before they can do good works; so, on the other hand, evil works do not properly make evil men, but evil men are themselves the authors of evil works." Actions, whether good or bad, always presuppose corresponding moral affections out of which they grow. Yet it is true, that good actions make good men better, as evil actions make bad men worse; for actions strengthen both principles and habits.

The whole of the instruction, contained in the passage which has now been examined, may be briefly comprised in this one statement; a good treasure in the heart is necessary to a good expenditure in the life. No man can do good, except he first be good; there must be a laying in before there can be a laying out.

The nature, necessity, and results of this treasure in the heart, together with the means of securing it, and the manner in which it should be employed, will form the subject of the ensuing treatise.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF A TREASURE.

A TREASURE consists of things laid up for subsequent use; and the acquisition of treasure involves several particulars, all of which suit with the laying up of spiritual provision in general.

1. It implies carefulness, anxious thoughts, solicitous endeavors. It is easy to scatter, but it requires industry to gather. Experience shows us, that they who strive for a great estate, take pains in the day, and plan in the night, while the eagerness of desire will not suffer them to sleep. So is it in spiritual things. It requires much care and effort to secure an abiding provision for the soul. Spiritual goods are not got with a wet finger. They drop not into the mouth of a careless loiterer. The more choice anything is, the more difficult is it to be attained. O think not to gain heaven by laziness! "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." A resolute Christian, as it were, storms this uphill city; as soldiers run to seize the prey, or racers to obtain the prize.

2. It implies choiceness in the things laid up. It is not all labor that obtains a treasure. "They labor in the very fire, that weary themselves for very vanity." Men may expend money and labor for that which can neither profit nor satisfy. Many things are better missed than gained. Stones and straws make no good treasure. A wise man will not account himself rich with toys and trifles. A Christian's treasure consists in spiritual things, which alone possess intrinsic and lasting value. Gold and silver are but worthless clay, compared with eternal riches. Spiritual blessings only make believers blessed. Nothing can be esteemed a treasure, which does not come from heaven, and lead to it. The good things of the throne are a saint's treasure; the good things of the footstool are the portion of wicked men; but whatever abundance of them they may possess, even though "their bellies be filled with hid treasures," they can derive from them no solid happiness. All earthly comforts are vain and empty, when viewed as the heritage of the soul. The whole world cannot counterbalance a single grain of grace. We estimate things by their worth, not by their bulk. The small diamond is of more value than mountains of sand. Only heavenly riches can make a treasure fit for the immortal mind.

3. It implies suitableness in the things stored up.

No sensible man will lay up what he knows he shall never need, and account it his treasure. Every tradesman lays up that which is adapted to his calling. Clothiers, staplers, tanners, husbandmen, have all their appropriate provisions, suited to their respective vocations. That may be an incumbrance to one, which is an advantage to another. Kings have their peculiar treasure—possessions, to which none but kings may aspire. So all God's kings have their peculiar treasure, which, as it is different from all others, is likewise, in some respects, various in itself. Moses had a treasure of meekness, Job of patience, Solomon of wisdom, John of love. As the child of God is to come behind in no gift, so is he to excel in that which he is more especially called to exercise. It is a great duty and mystery in religion to be wise in observation, and prudent in providing. Let Christians lay up supplies suitable to the several ages, states, offices, burdens, duties, relations, trials, and temptations, through which they may have to pass in the course of their lives; so shall they not be unfurnished or unprepared, but whichever way the Lord may lead them in this uneven world, still their feet shall stand in an even place, and go straight to heaven.

4. A treasure imports sufficiency. Store hath no lack. It is abundance that constitutes a trea-

sure. The granary of Egypt afforded plenty of corn. A scant portion is not wealth. Spiritual goods are a Christian's riches; and he ought to be rich in these riches, rich in faith, and rich in good works. What a significant expression is that of the apostle Paul, where he prays that believers "may be filled with all the fulness of God!" What, can our narrow vessels contain an infinite ocean? This is, indeed, impossible. Yet, though we cannot hold all, he would have us possess all. He would have us know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that our intellectual faculties may be furnished with heavenly light; and he would have us filled with all grace, as the richest treasure of our will and affections. Nothing less than fullness can satisfy his desire; nay, further, the fullness of *God;* yet, higher, *all* the fullness of God. Let the vessel be filled to the brim, and let it be made more capacious to receive larger incomes. Never can the believing soul have grace enough, till grace be perfected and crowned with glory. A gracious heart hath an insatiable appetite after heavenly delights and dainties. Nothing is so good as grace; and the more a soul has of it, the more it longs for increased supplies.

5. A treasure implies secrecy. Valued possessions are not exposed to the common view of all men. It was weakness and folly, begotten by os-

tentatious pride, that induced Hezekiah to exhibit his treasure to the Babylonian messengers. Treasures are usually hid in secret places. Hence we read of "treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places," and of "a treasure hid in a field." So this good man's treasure is said to be in his heart. The apostle Peter calls inward holiness "the hidden man of the heart." Into this none can see but the heart-searching God. He only, who knows all things, is the anatomist of this close and hidden man. Men see the face, but they see not what lies within. Hence it is that the greatest and best part of a Christian's treasure is invisible; as the roots of a tree under the earth, or the bottom of a ship under water; or rather as a merchant's goods in his warehouse. Thus is it with the saint's treasure. He is a Jew inwardly. His circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. The regenerate soul is the King's daughter, all glorious within, though some sparklings of grace appear without. The best and the worst of a soul is hid from the view of men. Happy were it for a Christian if he had no more corruption than appears outwardly; and wretched were he also, if he had no more grace than others can take notice of.

6. It is a treasure for its safety. This treasure,

being out of men's view, is therefore secure from their reach and touch. Treasures lie not loose, but are under lock and key. Treasure-cities are always well fenced, with guards appointed to attend them. And sure I am, that the treasure of a Christian is safe. Grace and peace are a saint's freehold, of which neither men nor devils can deprive him. Mary's better part cannot be taken from her. As soon may Christ be plucked out of heaven, as grace out of a believer's heart. The treasure of joy can no man take from him; for this pure stream grows stronger and sweeter, until it is swallowed up in the vast ocean of our Master's joy on high. A Christian's treasure is locked up in his heart, which is a cabinet that none can wrest open. Christ's heart was pierced, that a Christian's might remain untouched; hence it becomes impenetrable and invulnerable. A lively emblem of this was the heart of John Huss, which remained entire, even when his body was consumed by the flames. The heart of a saint may be pulled out of his bosom, but not his treasure out of his heart.

7. In a treasure there is readiness for a present supply. It is but giving a turn with the key, and taking out provision, and making use thereof, and all is as soon prepared as Abraham's feast for the angels, or Jacob's venison for his father Isaac. He that hath a treasure of food,

hath it not to seek when he should use it. He is not perplexed and embarrassed, like the man in the Parable, who ran to call up his neighbor, to borrow three loaves, because he had nothing to set before his friend that came unexpectedly. The well furnished Christian can make God welcome in all His visits; can own Him as a Friend, whether He come by day or by night, in mercy or in judgment; and be ready, even in the most sudden and unlooked for emergencies, to receive and entertain his celestial Guest. Of this we have a striking illustration in the Parable of the wise and foolish Virgins. The oil in the lamp is the treasure of grace in the heart; and although the virgin Christian may slumber as to the exercise of grace, yet, having its root and essence still living within him, he is ready, on a sudden alarm, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and to enter with Him into eternal blessedness. The foolish virgin is the treasureless soul, the graceless sinner, who has no oil at all, but while he goes to buy, is shut out of the presence-chamber. On this I shall dwell more at large hereafter. At present, let it only be observed in general, that he that hath a treasure, will be quickly furnished with all accommodations, on all occasions.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE.

THE second general inquiry is, what is the treasure of which our Saviour speaks in the text? I conceive it is principally intended of the thoughts of the heart, which are called the possessions of the heart, because these are the first-born of the soul, and enjoy the inheritance of it. You cannot turn off the thoughts from their freehold. You may suspend the tongue from speaking, and the hand from acting; but you cannot suspend the soul from thinking, while it is a rational soul; for this is an essential property of it, so long as it continues to be itself. Good or bad thoughts are every man's treasure and possession; and these centre and settle in the heart; these are the spring and source of actions and expressions. Now, it is said of a godly man; "The thoughts of the righteous are right;" or, as the word imports, they are in harmony with law, judgment, measure. A gracious person thinks as he is, according to the rules of enlightened and sanctified reason. His thoughts run in a right channel, to right objects,

for right ends; and are, therefore, very precious, and may well be called a treasure. Hence David's exclamation, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me!" Or, as some interpret the words, How rare and dear are the thoughts I have of Thee to my soul! This meaning is rendered probable by what follows, "When I awake I am still with Thee"—that is, in holy thoughts and heavenly meditations. A pious man's thoughts are a precious treasure. If his "tongue be as choice silver," what are his thoughts, which furnish the tongue with profitable discourse?

Now, as the thoughts feed the tongue and the hand, so there are four springs that feed and furnish the heart with holy thoughts. These are like the four rivers of Paradise; they water the divine garden of a Christian's soul; and being followed to the head, will certainly lead the believer upward to the celestial Paradise.

These thought-nourishing streams are—Scriptural Truth—Spiritual Graces—Large Experiences—and Lively Comforts.

The first of these, scriptural truth, is like the river Pison, "which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold." So this takes in the whole territory of the Holy Scriptures, where there are such choice mines of divine teachings as to make the soul both wise and rich unto salvation.

It is a great mercy to have the understanding replenished with a saving knowledge of gospel mysteries. Hence we are commanded to "buy the truth;" to "search the Scriptures;" to "seek for wisdom as for silver," and "for knowledge as for hid treasures." And the apostle exhorts us, "Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom," that is, copiously, abundantly. The expression denotes two things—the measure in which the word of God should dwell within us, and so implies plenteousness; and then the value of such spiritual furniture, and thus indicates richness. And surely a great stock of scriptural knowledge is a priceless treasure. O what a blessed thing is it to have a man's breast the library of Jesus Christ! The Sacred Scriptures are the wealth and the joy of a gracious soul. To David they were better than thousands of gold and silver. A mountain of transparent pearls, heaped as high as heaven, would be poor and mean compared with these. Hence he chose them as his heritage forever, and rejoiced in them as in all riches. A covetous miser could not take such delight in his bags, nor a young heir in a large inheritance, as holy David did in God's word. All the saints are priests unto God. Now, of Levi it is said, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips." So it is or ought to be

with God's spiritual priests; they should have the law of God graven in their hearts, and on their tongues the law of kindness and holiness. The word law, comes from a root that signifies to try, as merchants try and prove the wares which they buy and lay up. Hence also comes the word for gems and jewels, which are tried and found right. The sound Christian is the wise merchant, seeking goodly pearls. He tries what he reads or hears, by the standard and touchstone of Scripture; and having found genuine truths, he lays them up to the great enriching of this supreme and sovereign faculty of the understanding.

Another spring, that feeds holy thoughts, is found in spiritual graces—those fruits of the Spirit, which exceedingly help the fruit of the lips. If the will and affections be sanctified with a principle of true holiness, the lips and the life will bring forth heavenly expressions and actions. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." A gracious habit streams freely and fully into all the acts of spiritual life, and is at last swallowed up in the ocean of eternal life. It is said of Jesus Christ, the Divine Source of all grace, that "the fear of the Lord is His treasure;" and we also may say, that it is the Christian's treasure. A head full of notions will not make the soul rich, without a heart full of grace. It is grace that ennobles the

soul, and strengthens it to bear burdens, and to fulfill duties. Without the operation of grace in the heart, there can be no holiness in the life. All works of piety, charity, and sobriety, must flow from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. These unitedly contribute their influence to every good work. Obedience respects the command of a superior; love, the kindness of the lawgiver; faith, his bounty and reward. The first sways the conscience; the second inclines the heart; the third gives encouragement; and sure I am, that without these there can be no spiritual actings in an evangelical manner. He only possesses a gospel frame of spirit, who has the law written in his heart, and the works thereof in his hand, and whose life is a continual transcript of this blessed copy. For "he that doeth righteousness, is righteous;" yea, it is he that moveth heavenward, from a living treasure of gracious principles, and not from external compulsion, as clocks, and such dead, unconscious machines, are moved by artificial weights and springs. Hence, with the Church, each true believer can exclaim, "My soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab;" or, as it is otherwise rendered, "like the chariots of a willing people." If, as the words are sometimes explained, they refer primarily to Christ, still they are no less applicable to every truly gracious indi-

vidual, who is actuated by a new and living principle towards God and goodness. In the day of Christ's power, His people are volunteers in the way of duty. They are influenced by a free and princely spirit; the renewed will being the great engine that moves the soul in holy obedience. Their own spirits, renovated and impelled by redeeming Love, make them the willing servants of God.

Another stream, that feeds holy thoughts, is well gathered experience. The Christian's breast should be a treasury of experimental observation, which may be improved as props to uphold a tottering faith. It is said of those who witnessed the striking events connected with the birth of John the Baptist, that they "laid them up in their hearts." And thus we find Jacob, Samuel, David, Paul, and many others, carefully collecting and recalling their former experiences. Space would fail to notice all the instances of this kind. A careful and devout record of the time, place, and manner of divine dispensations and discoveries, has been of unspeakable advantage to believers. Experience begets hope; and we lose many important benefits by neglecting its teachings. Signal memorials of received mercies help us in the performance of present duties, and quicken faith, in the prospect of the greatest future difficulties.

All artists gather knowledge by recording experiments; and he is the wisest Christian, who, like Solomon, has his heart filled with wisdom, gathered from the fields of experience. Experience is the best instructor, and best aids a man in instructing others. An experienced physician, or lawyer, is seldom non-plussed; an experienced soldier comes off with honor. O Christians! lay up in your hearts what you have seen with your eyes, and felt in your souls, of the vanity of worldly attainments and joys, and of the excellence of those which are spiritual and heavenly. You cannot be too young to collect experiences; you cannot be too old to recollect and improve them. If your green heads would use diligence, your gray hairs would be crowned with a rich diadem of practical knowledge and skill, by means of which the works and duties, so difficult in your younger years, would be rendered, in your old age, easy and pleasant. A young carpenter is long with a little, and makes many chips; while an experienced workman dispatches his task both more quickly and more neatly. It is so in religion; all its labors and exercises are greatly facilitated by experience. And how does experience feed thoughts? In this manner. When a soul is at a pinch, and the heart struck dead with some sudden surprisal, so that the thoughts are puzzled, experience comes in to

bring relief, and represents the matter as feasible, since it can call to mind as arduous a case, which yet was not insuperable. Thus it kindles hope for the future, from the torch which memory holds over the past. And thus it marshals the faculties of the soul in their proper ranks, and brings it through the present undertaking with order and victory, whether it involve the discharge of duty, or the endurance of trial.

The last stream, that supplies the heart with heavenly thoughts, flows from the wells of divine consolation. This refreshes the soul with cheering incomes and influences. This makes it both happy and fruitful. In the midst of painful reflections, and terrifying apprehensions, the comforts of God delight the soul. O the joy which these beget under the pressure of sorrow! Nothing can fatally injure our peace, if we are blessed with the presence and communion of the Saviour. The sense of His love sheds a serene and undying light upon all the gloom of doubt, and the darkness of adversity. The fullness of satisfaction which it produces, pervades and engrosses the heart, and leaves no room for carking cares, and corroding anxieties. There is no misery on earth, which these divine joys cannot allay; one drop of them would even mitigate hell torments. This is a treasure, indeed, which, as it is of great efficacy, so it is the satis-

fying result of the fore-mentioned provision. Scriptural truths, spiritual graces, and sensible experiences, always bring with them pure and solid peace. But, in addition to these, there are two other sources by which the comfort of the soul is greatly increased. These are the promises of the Gospel, and the testimony of a clear conscience.

Promises are the storehouse of comfort, the charter of our privileges, the conveyances of our heavenly inheritance. Promises are the breasts of consolation; the great receptacles of that sincere milk of the word, stored up for babes in Christ. "The promises," says a good divine, "are bills of exchange given you, that you may draw your estate into another country." Nothing can cheer up the heart like a promise. Hence David desires to "hear the voice of joy and gladness,"— that is, in a promise. Upon this means of spiritual comfort, whether it relate to present or future enjoyments, the word of God hath put its seal. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is said of the Duke of Guise, that he was the richest man in France, though not in lands, yet in bills and bonds, and great friends. So a true Christian is the richest man in the world, both in possession, and in reversion, for "all things are" his,

Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." These exceeding great and precious promises may cheer up the heart of a drooping saint, were it as low as hell; for they were made and confirmed with an oath, that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation. It is strange if the bucket of faith do not always draw up the water of consolation out of the wells of salvation. God hath ordered in nature our feeding to be with pleasure. Thus, also, in spiritual things, our application and improvement of promises are attended with sweetness and delight. Here, then, is one great means of comfortable thoughts — the believing of soul-enriching promises.

Clearness of conscience is also a help to comfortable thoughts. Yet observe, that peace is not so much effected as preserved by a good conscience and conversation; for though joy in the Holy Ghost will make its nest nowhere but in a holy soul, yet the blood of Christ only can speak peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." An exact life will not make, but keep conscience quiet; just as an easy shoe heals not a sore foot, but keeps a sound one from crushing. Walking with God, according to gospel rules, hath peace entailed upon it; and that peace is such a treasure, that thereby

a Christian may have his rejoicing from himself. His own heart sings him a merry tune, which the threats and reproaches of the world cannot silence. This treasure of comfort is not exhausted by affliction; death itself does not destroy, but increases and advances it to an eternal triumph. O the excellency and necessity of it! Paul laid it up for a death-bed cordial; "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." And Hezekiah dares hold it up to God, as well as cheer up himself with it, on the approach of death. A conscience good in point of integrity, will be good also in point of tranquillity. "The righteous are bold as a lion." "Great peace have they who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." O what comfort and solace has a clear conscience! A conscientious man hath something within, to answer accusations from without. He carries ever with him a treasure so rich and full, that it will not fail in the greatest straits and hazards. In the eloquent words of Bernard, "the pleasures of a good conscience are the Paradise of souls, the joy of angels, a garden of delights, a field of blessing, the temple of Solomon, the court of God, the habitation of the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAYING OUT OF HEART-TREASURE

Hitherto the laying up of a treasure of good thoughts, by the accession of truths, graces, experiences, and comforts, has been considered. The next point to be noticed, is, how this treasure is brought forth, expended, and improved; for that treasure is in a manner useless, that is not employed. Now this treasure is brought into exercise in four ways — in meditation, in discourse, in action, and in suffering.

I. The heart employs it in devout soliloquies and heavenly meditations, in cheering sentiments and elevating emotions. These keep the Christian such good company, that he is never less alone than when alone. Scripture truths are sweet and satisfying companions in all conditions, places, and stations. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." And what can we desire more than a guide in our way, a guard around our beds, and a sweet companion in our solitudes and serious retirements? Such are

divine truths. A Christian may live upon this treasure in a wilderness, in a prison, aye, as Luther says, even in hell itself. God's statutes were David's songs in the house of his pilgrimage. Isaac went out into the fields for recreation, and took his treasure along with him, getting a solitary and savory repast of meditation. When a man is shut out from ordinances, "his soul may be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when it meditates on God in the night watches;" yea, when dull and discouraging thoughts discompose the spirit, this treasure helps as a holy charm to raise the spirit of the believer, and drive away the evil spirit of deadness and distraction. Meditation is a kind of deliberate ecstacy; the harmonious melody of the soul's faculties within itself by a mutual and musical concert. It is the soul's self-conference heard only by itself. It is a restoring of meat formerly taken down, and diffusing it into the several veins and arteries of the soul. Meditation, in a word, is a holy concoction and digestion of divine truths, which prepares and ripens the soul for heaven. O the ravishing nature of a close and fixed meditation! It is a God-enjoying and self-profiting exercise. The devout soul, that is thus furnished with a treasure, can expatiate upon all things, and, like the laborious bee, fetch the honey of some comfort out of every object and subject. When

grace is in the heart, knowledge in the head, and truth in the memory, the Christian, through divine assistance, will make good work of every condition and dispensation. It is both the character and the honor of a Christian to meditate on God's law day and night. He that talks much with his own heart by meditation, and takes frequent turns in Paradise by contemplation, will far transcend the rate and pace of ordinary Christians. We are commonly transformed into the dispositions and manners of those whose company we frequent. And if we keep company with a holy God by meditation, we shall be more exactly holy in all manner of conversation.

II. This treasure of the heart vents itself by the lips in heavenly communications; and that in a two-fold manner.

1. A treasured soul discourses profitably with men. This, I think, is the chief design of the text; a bringing forth good things in speaking to men's edification. A gracious heart freely pours out holy expressions. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth." That inward spring feeds these sweet streams, and tips the tongue with divine rhetoric. "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue." Not like vain-glorious, empty scholars, or conceited, formal professors, that have got some

scraps of confused notions, then set open the pack, and expose all to view, but are quickly exhausted; no, no, these well-furnished souls have an overflowing treasure of holy matter to produce upon occasion, and can speak a word in season, upon any subject, to any soul. It is said of Plato and of Ambrose, that bees swarmed in their cradles, as presages of their future eloquence. So the honeycomb of Scripture truths distinguishes the Christian. His speech is seasoned with salt, because his heart is seasoned with grace. His discourses, like honey, at once become salutary, and please the sanctified auditor. When a well-guided tongue is the interpreter of a cleansed heart, it is food and physic to him that improves it; "for the tongue of the wise is health." The same word in the Hebrew that signifies tongue, is also used, joined with another word, to denote a wedge of gold. Thus, a treasured heart finds a precious golden tongue; and nothing can be more cordial to the fainting heart, than the fruit of such choice lips.

2. This treasure is exercised in religious duties and holy performances. The root of grace in the heart brings forth these fruits of the lips in prayer and praise. The spirit of prayer sends up to heaven this divine incense. He that hath this lively liturgy in his heart, needs not to be prompted by

men; the Spirit can help both to affections and expressions. A treasured soul hath a stock of prayers, as an able minister hath a stock of sermons, though he may be without a stock of written notes; I mean the body of divinity in his head, which makes a ready scribe. The more treasure a soul hath within, the more ready will it be to every good work, and the more raised to God in the work. And such a one is helped very much against distractions, the great complaint of pious souls. He that hath store of gold and silver in his pocket, and but a few brass farthings, will more readily, upon every draught, come out with the former, than with the latter. So he whose heart is stocked with holy thoughts, will not find carnal cogitations so rife and frequent. If the heart have indited a good matter, the tongue will be as the pen of a ready writer. If the heart be filled with grace, it will make melody to the Lord, and music to good men. A treasured soul is ready to trade with God in duty. Yet take this caution: a true Christian, though having a large measure of habitual grace, is not always in an equal actual capacity for duty. David's heart may need tuning as well as his harp. The key of this treasure may be lost or rusted. Hence the treasure of that man after God's own heart was locked up, in a great measure, for the space of nine months, till God

sent the key by Nathan to open the sluice of repentance, and draw out the streams of grace.

III. The treasure in the heart is also drawn out by the hands, in works of piety towards God, charity to men, and sobriety with respect to ourselves. It is not enough for the believer to have the axe laid to the root of the tree, in sound conviction and gospel humiliation; but he is to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, in a gospel conversation. We must not only believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, but faith must work by love; upward towards God, by the obedience of faith; inward in the heart, by purifying it; and downward towards men, by doing good unto all, but especially to the household of faith. Here is a large field for my pen, and for the Christian's hand; but a few general remarks must at present suffice. The furnished Christian is unreserved in his obedience. He shuns not the hardest and most hazardous duties; he will not serve God with that which costs him nothing: and this is a grand discriminating characteristic betwixt a treasured saint, and a treasureless hypocrite. A carnal man loves a cheap religion, and is loth to be at any cost or pains for God, in the way of commanded duty. But very different is it with a child of God. The more spiritual a duty is, and the more opposite it is to carnal ease and profit,

the more freely does he close with it. He is willing to cut off the right hand of a beloved lust; to pray for enemies; to forgive wrongs; to distribute to the needy; knowing that all these are essential parts of our holy religion. When, therefore, the heart is full of grace, the hands, Dorcas-like, will be full of good works, which are called "fruits of righteousness." It is the Christian's duty and dignity to be fruitful in every good work, which cannot proceed from any other root than this heart-treasure. A willing heart will find a liberal hand to relieve the poor. The merchandise of penitent Tyre is treasured up for the supply of God's holy ones. The liberal soul devises liberal things, and will not make use of carnal reasonings, such as danger of poverty, unworthiness of the poor, hardness of the times, and the like, which the prophet calls "the instruments of the churl;" but the largeness of a saint's inward treasure will lead him carefully to seek, and thankfully to embrace objects and occasions of charity. In some cases, he will even go beyond his power, whereby the freeness of his heart enhances the mite into a pound, in true worth, and in God's account. Thus the readiness of the heart compensates the weakness of the hand.

A treasured saint hath no stint of desires and endeavors in his labors for God, and the good-will

of his heart adds new vigor to his fainting hand. Naturalists observe, that when the heart inclines more to the right side, the spirits are more lively and apt for contemplation and action. Hence that saying of Solomon. "A wise man's heart is at his right hand." I am sure that when a Christian's heart leaneth God-wards, his hand is full of activity in the ways of God, and in works of godliness. When the soul is filled with grace, the hand is fitted for acts of religion.

IV. This inward heart-treasure greatly assists the Christian in bearing his burdens. The time of affliction is a spending time. If there be any grace within, tribulation will draw it out. Hence it is said to work patience; not that it creates what was not in the soul before, but calls forth and evinces that which before lay hidden there. The fiery furnace will try and improve the soul's spiritual strength; for if it faint in the day of adversity, its strength is small, and its treasure poor. Now shall it be clearly known, whether the conscience be sound, or whether it will founder; whether it will move well or ill in rough ways. In the Revelation of St. John, when mention is made of Antichrist's tyranny and ruin, twice is it said, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints;" that is, here is the trial of it, here is room for it, here is the root and fruit of it, even

the overthrow of Antichrist, for which they have been so long waiting and praying. This is surely a glorious sight worth beholding,—Rome flaming, saints triumphing. Yet, in the mean time, they have need of faith and patience. For immediately before both these passages, we have a description of Rome's rage. The Devil will come down with the greater wrath when he hath a shorter time; and the last bitings of this dying Beast will be the fiercest; which will bring forth all the saint's graces,—and all little enough for the time of trial. We have great need of patience after we have done God's will, that we may also endure His will, till His promises be performed. We must buckle on the armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in an evil day; and having done and endured all, to stand on the field as conquerors. In personal conflicts, all our stock of suffering graces may be put to it Poverty will try our faith; disgrace our self-denial; sickness our patience; delay in the answer of prayers for a long expected mercy will try our hope,—and all these graces must have their perfect work, that the Christian also may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. He should have the whole panoply of a Christian; the complete accomplishments of a saint; every grace in its height and due proportion. Job, David, Eli, and Hezekiah had laid in

a large stock of suffering graces, and they found enough to do with them in affliction; they had no more than they needed. Love bears and breaks through all things; faith holds up the head and heart above discouragements. Nature hath furnished the camel with a back fitted to bear huge burdens, and a tractable bowing of his knees to the ground, that he may be the more readily loaded. So will the well-taught and accomplished saint meekly stoop to take up, and cheerfully carry Christ's cross, during His pleasure. He is a sound-hearted Christian indeed, who, like the nightingale, can sing most sweetly when the thorn is at his breast; and whose graces are like spices, which, the more they are bruised, send forth the richer odor. But a carnal man, wanting this treasure of grace, kicks at, yea, kicks off, his burden. It is true that, from strength of natural temper, or from acquired magnanimity, a man may possibly sustain his infirmity, and not succumb under the pressure of outward sorrow. Yet there is a vast difference between a gracious and a graceless heart in enduring afflictions, both as to their carriage under them, and the benefit which they derive from them. This difference is strikingly described in the following passage from Augustine. "In similar sufferings, there is a great dissimilarity of sufferers; and though they are sub-

jected to the same trial, yet is there not the same virtue and vice; as under one fire gold brightens, chaff smokes, and under the same flail stubble is crushed, corn purged. Thus also the lees mingle not with the oil, though pressed together. In like manner, one and the same onset proves, purifies, and sweetly melts the good, but condemns, wastes, roots out the bad. Hence in the same affliction the wicked hate and blaspheme God, while the good pray and praise. Of so much importance is it, not what a man suffers, but with what spirit he suffers; for, with the same stirring, mud smells abominably, and ointment most fragrantly."*

* Augustine, City of God, Book I. ch. 8, p. 16.

CHAPTER V.

NECESSITY OF THIS TREASURE.

We come now to the confirmation of this doctrine, That a good treasure in the heart is necessary to a good expenditure in the life.

The first proof of this may be taken from nature and reason, which furnish us with these undoubted maxims: That a thing must first be, before it can act. Nothing can give what it hath not. Such as the cause is, such are the effects. Of nothing, nothing can be made, without a miracle of creation; and we cannot expect to be fed by miracles where ordinary means are provided, and supposed to be used. If we wilfully neglect to lay in provision, while we have a season for it, we are guilty of groundless presumption in hoping to lay out in the time of need. How can any expect liquor from the still, meat from the cupboard, garments from the wardrobe, where none of these were laid in? What madman would think to reap without sowing, or to teach others when he has no learning himself? Was there ever a bringing forth without a conception? Is it not fond dotage in a shop-keeper to

think to sell wares when he has none? And is this preposterous in natural things, and can it hold in spiritual? Joseph could not supply the country with corn without a store. A tree cannot bring forth good fruit, except it be good. "Can a fig-tree bear olive-berries, or a vine figs?" And can we think that men can act graciously without a principle of grace?

Another reason is drawn from the offices of Christ. The Second Person in the sacred Trinity was filled with treasure, that He might fill the saints with a treasure of grace. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And for this very end hath God stored Christ, that He might supply His members; "that of His fullness, we may receive, and grace for grace." "The plain, simple sense of which text," says Calvin, "is, that what graces God heaps upon us, they all flow from this fountain; therefore are we watered with the graces that are poured upon Christ." For this, it should be observed, is the nature of the gospel dispensation; that whatever spiritual good things the saints receive, they receive them not now from God as Creator, so much as through the hands of Jesus Christ, the great Mediator of the new covenant. He is the fountain and the channel of all the grace which our souls

can expect or receive. He is our Aaron anointed above His fellows, that the oil of grace might in its proportion fall from the Head to the members. Hence it is that He is called Christ, and we Christians, from this holy unction. For this end was the Lord Jesus advanced to be the Head of the church, that He might fill it with all gracious supplies; and hence it is that the church is called "His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all;" that is, the effect of Christ's fullness, who filleth all the saints, in all ordinances and means of conveyance of gracious influences. The beginning of grace is from Him; the growth and strength of grace are from Him; its essence and its abundance are both bestowed by Him. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." So then we see Christ is designed to be our Joseph, to furnish our souls with a treasure; and, therefore, he that neglects to stock his heart from this storehouse, undervalues the great office of Christ, and does what he can to frustrate the object of God, in the soul's supply. This is horrible ingratitude.

A third reason is drawn from the end and design of all providences and ordinances. They are given to be helps to promote this heart-treasure. God puts a price into our hands, that we may have grace in our hearts. He gives us a summer season

to lay up for this pinching winter. Naturalists say, that while the halcyon sitteth on her nest, there is calmness and serenity upon the sea. Such days of tranquillity and gospel opportunities have we enjoyed in this tempestuous sea of the world, not to feather our nests below, much less to hatch the cockatrice eggs of sin; but to warm and ripen the brood of grace in our souls, and to lay up a precious treasure for the evil days of old age, sickness, or persecution, and for the long day of eternity. When God affords a season, He expects things should be done in that season; and if man neglect it, his misery will be great upon him. The very ant lays up for winter, and reads a lecture to man of good husbandry. Gathering in summer is a token of wisdom, but sleeping in harvest is a sinful, shameful, beggaring practice. God expects that we should work in the light, and walk in the day, while this day of grace lasts. It is a sad and astonishing thing, that God should hold men a candle for them to play by; especially when time is short and uncertain—death and eternity so near, and of such vast consequence. O what a confounding question will that be one day—"Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" God takes a strict account of our helps and of our hoard, and expects a due proportion. O what a sad reckoning will

many make, whose negligence will be condemned by the diligence of brute creatures, yea, by the light of their own consciences!

Another reason is taken from our heart's natural emptiness of a treasure of good. "In me," says Paul, "that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This barren soil has the more need to be manured, this empty house to be well furnished; lest the heart still continue destitute of all saving good, and the soul depart out of this world as naked of saving grace as it entered. What a pity it is that so costly a house should stand empty of inhabitant and furniture! The souls of God's people are vessels that are to be well fraught with all saving graces, that they may be fitted for, and filled with, eternal glory. The Christian is to be holily covetous of these riches of glory, that amends may be made for his natural vacuity. O the vast chaos of an unregenerate heart! A long time and great pains must go to the replenishing of it. There are many waste corners to be filled, even after the truth of grace is planted, before the soul can be enlarged to a due capacity for service here, and for heaven hereafter. "The soul of a believer," says Goodwin, "is a house well built; where faith lays the foundation, hope helps up the walls, knowledge sets open the windows, and love covers the roof; and this makes a dwelling fit for

Christ." And I add, there must be every day a sweeping, and watching, and decking of this house, with further degrees of grace; embellishing it with divine ornaments, and furnishing every room, I mean every faculty, with a rich treasure of heavenly blessings. It will be some cost and toil to hang every room of the heart with lively pictures of the Divine image; for it is altogether empty of that which is truly and spiritually good, or may be called a treasure.

But this is not all, for the soul is by nature filled with an evil treasure. "The heart is desperately wicked." "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually." The mind, will, and affections, are stuffed with a world of blindness, hardness, and wildness. The soul is naturally prone to evil, averse to good; and, therefore, a treasure of good is necessary, to outweigh and exclude this treasure of wickedness—to season and prepare the soul for God, as sin did for Satan. The love of God is to be shed abroad into those veins and channels of the heart where sin now runs with so violent a current. The Christian is to be sanctified in the most polluted part. And surely it is not a little grace that will obstruct the active movements of sin; for though grace be of greater worth, yet it is disputable whether, in this life, it attain to greater strength than corruption, even in

the hearts of the sanctified. But certainly, the greater the measure of grace and treasure of sanctifying truths, the more power will there be against corruption. The whole armor of God—which is also the saint's treasure—resists inward lusts and Satan's assaults. The Spirit is compared in Scripture to wind; and some have called the winds, "the besoms of the world," because they serve to sweep the air and the earth clean from infectious vapors. But I am sure, the Spirit of grace with the fruits thereof, are choice besoms to sweep the filth of sin out of the soul, and also to adorn it with divine jewels, and assist it with notable antidotes against corruption. These are as water to wash the heart from filthiness. The smallest measure of their influence helps against sin; but the more grace, the less sin in the heart. Grace is a principle of life, and opposes dead works, which otherwise would lead the soul to the chambers of death. This treasure is, therefore, of absolute necessity; and the same might we say of the word, which being hid in the heart, helps against sin in the life.

Another reason is taken from the inbred motions of human nature. All men on earth seek after a treasure. It is the harmonious inquest of all rational creatures, "Who will show us any good,"—anything to make a treasure of? Man has a capa-

cious soul, an active and laborious spirit. The whole world is not a morsel big enough for his rapacious swallow. "Our covetous desires," says one, "are a long sentence without a period." Finite things are dry meat to a hungry soul. They sooner glut than fill. Nay, they lure on this busy bee to buzz about one flower after another, till it hath wearied itself in vain, and sits down in utter despair of comfort and satisfaction. Nothing but interest in the God of heaven, and the image of the God of heaven, can fill up all defects. A Christ alone to justify, and a Christ within to sanctify, make the soul completely happy; for Christ within is "the hope of glory." A glorified and a gracious Redeemer is the Christian's only treasure—his all in all. God hath furnished man with an immortal soul; learning may expand it, but grace fills it: nothing else will reach its large dimensions. Man is a little world himself, more precious than this greater world in which he dwells—by Christ's own verdict, who is truth itself. The soul itself is better than the world, and it must have something better than itself to be a treasure for it. Philosophy seeks,—Christianity shows,—the sound believer only finds true happiness, which, like a wise merchant, he has fetched out of the field of the Gospel into the cabinet of his own heart.

Further, whatsoever men have or love, they desire a treasure thereof. No man but would have a large treasure of a precious commodity. He that hath gold and silver would heap it up to a treasure. He that hath wisdom and learning would still have more. Men join house to house, and field to field, to procure for themselves and their heirs a fair domain, a large estate. How many rich men are still as eager for more as if they had not enough to purchase a single meal! Yet these seek for earth, as if abundance thereof would purchase heaven. Like the partridge, they sit close on these eggs, though they hatch them not, nor are ever likely to bring them to their desired maturity. O the unhallowed thirst after filthy lucre! Many think to fill their souls with wealth, whereas they cannot fill one of the least members of their body, the eye, which yet a nut shell will cover. The world at the best is like Pasotes' banquet, which, when the guests began to eat, vanished into nothing. Shall so many men set their eyes, and hearts too, on that which is not; and shall not God's children make a treasure of that which is enduring substance? Shall men think to make a treasure of coals, and chaff, and empty shadows; and shall not the Christian gather store of pearls and jewels for his treasure? Shall the children of the world be more wise and wary for earth, than

the children of light for heaven? God forbid. Surely the Christian has as great reason to heap up as any; the commodities which he seeks are more rare, rich, and necessary than any other; and why then should he not get a heart-treasure? Let these reasons both convince the judgment and sway the affections. They furnish clear and powerful motives to the earnest pursuit of spiritual riches.

Moreover, this heart-treasure, and this only, discriminates between persons and persons. My meaning is, that this puts a difference between saints and sinners, between weak and strong Christians. As the treasure in the heart is, so is every man's state. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:" not as he speaks with his lips. Formalists will speak God as fair as any; they honor Him with their lips, and flatter Him with false and fawning attentions, as though He were an idol. But the heart-searching God is not pleased, except the heart be upright with Him. It is the upright in whom He delights; not in a person merely as he acts with his hands, or walks with his feet, in many passages of his life. A man may, with Ahab, walk softly—with Herod, do many things—with Simon Magus, make large profession of faith; yea, it is possible a man may suffer many troubles, and even death itself, in a good cause; yet unless

he have a heart treasured with grace, he is rejected, and may go to hell at last. God judges of the fruits by the root; though men judge of the root by the fruits. A heart after His own heart is better than the tongue of men or of angels. The distinction of persons has respect to internal principles and workings. A good man may sometimes do an evil work, and a bad man may do a good work; but how are their hearts? The best conferences or performances are not current coin with the God of heaven, except they issue out of the mint of a heart where God's image is stamped. A little good is accounted much when there is a treasure within; much seeming good is looked on as nothing when there is no treasure. This also makes the difference between a strong and weak Christian. Let their gifts and outward seemings be what they will, yet the greater or lesser degree of real grace distinguishes their attainments; and, accordingly, these measures have different influences upon their lives, duties, comforts, and preparedness for death.

Again, this treasure assimilates the soul to God. The great Jehovah is the only self-existent and self-sufficient good. He is an absolute, complete, and independent Being, and needs no accession of creatures or created powers to make Him happy. Nothing can add to, or detract from, His infinite

and incomprehensible blessedness. He is a treasure of all good, in and to Himself, and needs neither gold nor silver to enrich Him. Parallel to this, in some proportion, is the saint's sweet and secret treasure, garnered in the solitary recesses of his heart. The Christian is a little world, and is purely independent upon the creature for his happiness. He can, through grace, live comfortably without the world, though not without God; yea, God is so much in him, as well as to him, that, with His presence, he can live comfortably when other things are dead. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself;" that is, he shall have sufficient content from his own conscience. There is, in the original, but one word here for a backslider being filled with his ways of sin and guilt, and a gracious soul's satisfaction from the sweet result of his own heart; thus showing that a man's own conscience is either his heaven or hell, his greatest comforter or tormentor. The world cannot alter the joy or sadness of the heart. A thorough, well tried child of God hath his rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. It is a peddling, beggarly life to wander abroad for morsels; but that is a noble kind of living, when a man hath all within doors, and needs not the sorry contributions of the creatures.

I speak not of the fancied deification of the Familists, which is nothing less than blasphemy; but certainly the sound Christian, in a sound sense, bears some resemblance to the Divinity in this self-sufficiency: and the more treasure he has, the more is he like God; for such a soul is elevated above the creature, and placed in a higher orbit, which storms and tempests cannot reach. Nay, a soul whose conversation is in heaven, hath no dependence upon, nor intercourse with the creature, in order to complete his felicity; no more than the sun needs the glimmering light of the stars to make day. I might also add, that herein is the Christian's resemblance to the infinite Jehovah, because he has a principle of motion within himself, and not from without; for as God is a free Agent — as He himself is the sole cause of His own actions — so in a sense do the saints act from an inward principle. Hence those Scripture expressions, of a man's spirit making him willing; and of the heart smiting a man, or witnessing for him, or with him. Wicked men are dead; but grace is a principle of life, and resembles the Author of it: "for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The decayed liberty of the will is in part restored by grace; and so far as the soul is spiritual, the soul of a saint is a flame of fire ascending to and acting for God; and the greater treasure of this

heavenly element which a man has in his breast, the more he resembles God.

The final argument, to evince the necessity of this heart-treasure, is drawn from the profit and advantage of having it; and that principally in facilitating the most arduous duties of religion, and furnishing the soul for every good work. And here I shall keep close to the treasure of holy thoughts, fed with those four streams of truths, graces, comforts, and experiences; and constituting not only a saving principle, but such a measure thereof as will make up a treasure.

Now the frame of a treasured soul for duty is ready, sincere, uniform, and perpetual.

A treasured heart is ready for duty. Like a well stored housekeeper, you cannot take him unprovided. He is like a well accomplished scholar, that is never at fault, or a watchful soldier, that is always fit for service. The Christian has prepared materials to build the house, and wants nothing but its setting up in actual performance; yea, the house is built and furnished, in some degree, for the entertainment of its royal Occupant. "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." The bow is strung, the heart is fixed; the fire is glowing in the embers upon the hearth; and one blast of the Spirit's breathing heightens it to a flame. Yet

suppose the heart be not in actual readiness, still habits are sooner educed into act than new habits infused; and this the foolish virgins knew by sad experience.

But observe, the more there is of this treasure, the greater will be the readiness for duty. The reason why we are not more free in prayer, conference, and meditation, is because we are not more filled with grace; otherwise gracious acts would flow from us as naturally as streams from the spring. Had we a sufficient treasure of piety, we should never want suitable matter, and lively affections. We should not need to force ourselves to offer sacrifice, nor have to bind it with main strength to the horns of the altar; but we should enter upon every service freely, cheerfully, delighting in God's ways as in our proper element, and running with enlarged hearts. The holy angels, and the glorified spirits of the just made perfect, have a perfect treasure of divine faculties, and are therefore ever prepared to do God's will. Now we pray that God's "will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" yet this can never be, till this living treasure fill our hearts. But O how quickly shall we hear a command, and how swiftly shall we obey it, if we have this treasure! A good soul is like the centurion's servant—half a word will make him run. When God said to David, "Seek my

face," his heart quickly echoed, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." God's warrant carried the force of an argument. The ready Christian needs no persuading when he knows his Master's pleasure. This is one choice advantage of having a treasure.

A treasured soul is sincere and serious; not hypocritical and forced. Israel of old made covenants, and seemed very religious; and God himself attested that they had well spoken; but adds, "O that there were such a heart in them!" To the same effect is that strange passage in Jeremiah. "Though they say, the Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely." Why, is not that a truth? Yes, a great truth. God alone is the living God; but when they say so, their heart gives the lie to their lips. They say it with a deceitful heart, and that they may deceive. Though it be a truth in itself, yet they speak it not as a truth, wanting all heart to assert it. It is but a fond and frolic ostentation to invite a friend to dinner, when nothing is prepared. It is a mocking of God to bring Cain's sacrifice, a body without a heart, a carcase without a spirit. It is as if a Jew had brought the skin of a beast for sacrifice, and no more. But where there is a treasure in the heart, there the essentials of the service are made up; the work is complete before God; that is, it is not lame or defective in any important and vital part. It is such as may

be truly called a real good work. This is the chief thing that God expects; and if a good heart be wanting, the work is still undone. But a sincere Christian finds his prayer in his heart, which he utters with his lips. "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer." He found it not only in his book, but in his heart. He drew his prayer from his treasure. Such a man will pray a prayer, as David did, and not only say a prayer. What cares God for a little lip-labor. He may say, "Who required these things at your hand? Did I did not require them of your hearts? A mock feast or fast will not content me; I shall not be put off with an empty show: I will have your hearts, or nothing; and I must have a treasure in your hearts, or all you bring is worth nothing." The truth is, God takes principal notice of the heart, and observes how that stands affected. If idols be set up in the heart, God gives no heed to a people's prayers. There is, therefore, the utmost need that we look to the frame of the heart.

A heart-treasure makes the Christian uniform, and without reserve, in the duties of religion. He takes the religion of the Bible as it is, and meets its obligations without halting or halving. He practices all righteousness at all times. There is a sweet harmony and exact symmetry in his performance of duty. Some can perform easy duties,

not the more difficult; but the treasured believer can go through with any thing which God in the word hath made his duty; and hence it is, that he is "complete in all the will of God." The law of God in his heart corresponds to every part of His will in the written word. Graces and duties are concordant one to another. They are like "a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot—their cheeks comely with rows of jewels, their necks with chains of gold;" that is, the soul of a believer is handsomely adorned with a comely train of graces and duties. Such a person will at all times act like himself, so that one part of his life will not cross another, as a liar's tales and a hypocrite's conduct do. He serves not God by fits and starts, in good moods and motions, so as to be off and on in religion; but he has a constant, settled spirit; "a right spirit," such as David prayed for,—a spirit disposed for God, fitted for duty, and bringing forth good fruit in due season; like a skillful housekeeper, that is never so suddenly surprised, but he can make a prudent shift to treat his friend according to his degree. Man, in his fallen state, is uncertain, intricate, and multiform in all his principles and actions. You cannot tell where to find him, amidst his restless "gadding about to change his way." But being renewed, he is in part, and in some proportion, restored to that

original rectitude, simplicity, and stability of temper and practice that dwelt in Adam before his fall; so that according to the degree of grace received, he has a constant, uniform frame and tenor of spirit, and holds one straight, direct, and even course towards heaven. His character resembles the motion of the wheels in Ezekiel's vision. "When they went, they went upon their four sides;" indicating their squareness and suitableness to all God's will. "And they returned not when they went;" thus denoting their constant, permanent, and unchanging motion. Consider, too, the excellency and beauty of uniformity in religious duties. When works of nature or of art are uniform, what lustre they have! We are much taken with a building that is compact and well proportioned. A garden drawn exactly,—an army marshalled in complete ranks and postures, are comely sights. Just such are the fruits of holiness, proceeding from a well treasured heart. And indeed without this treasure there can be no such harmony in holy performances; but the actings will be like the legs of the lame, very unequal.

A treasure in the heart will make holy duties constant and perpetual. Though there may be some temporary intermissions, there will never be a total cessation, in the acts of religion. Will a hypocrite pray always? No, verily. The water

rises no higher than the spring, and waters fail that have no spring, like Job's snow-water, which, when it waxed warm, vanished away. But a little brook supplied with a constant spring holds out in winter and summer. Even such is the difference between the performances of a treasured and a a treasureless heart. Two men perform duties, the one from gifts, the other from grace; the former in time withers, the latter daily increases. The king of France showed the ambassador of Spain his rich treasures: the ambassador looking under the treasure chests, said, "Have these a spring?—my master's treasures have:" meaning both the Indies. Just so is it here. Let the attainments of unregenerate men be ever so excellent, you may come to see an end of all their perfection. Their eye of knowledge may be darkened, and their arm of natural and acquired abilities clean dried up. For how can a well be always giving out water that receives none? How can a rose keep its freshness without a root? But they that are "planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age." The seed of God is a lively principle, that will never die; and this spring of grace is fed with supplies from the fullness of Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of gardens, and well of living waters. Hence He saith,

"He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." That is, he shall have a perpetual supply of grace, and shall send forth constant emanations of gracious acts. A well furnished Christian can never be drawn dry. His Saviour and his treasure ever live, and because Christ lives, the saints and their graces shall live for ever. O friends! what would you give in these backsliding times to hold out to the end, that you may not make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience? Behold, I show unto you an excellent way. Heap one grace upon another, till you possess a treasure. Tie a chain of these pearls together, and lay them up in the closet of your hearts, and you will never be spiritually impoverished. Be holily covetous after all graces that are attainable. Add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity; for if you have these, you will not be barren or unfruitful in duties, and if you perform duties according to these, you shall never fall. These form a chain that links the soul to God, and reaches as high as heaven. But do not think that you can endure to the end without such a treasure; for he that "hath not root in himself, dureth but for a while." No wonder if many drop off like leaves in autumn; they have nothing to bear them out. They draw only from themselves, like the

spider, which spins her webs out of her own bowels, and they are swept away as the spider's web. But the gracious soul has no less than an infinite God to supply the treasures of grace; so that let a Christian fall off to many acts of sin, carelessness in duty, and a course of grievous declension, yet this treasure will ultimately reclaim him. As a spring clears itself from mud in time, so he shall be brought back to God. There is something in the heart of a backsliding saint that makes him restless in that state, and ever yearning to return to his forsaken Saviour. Of this we have a strong example in the feelings which David expresses in view of his deep and mournful fall. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep;" is his acknowledgment: "seek thy servant;" is his request: "for I do not forget thy commandments;" is the argument by which he enforces it. As if he had said, There is yet something in my heart that owns Thee; though I be fallen far, yet not so far but that I am still reaching after Thee, and I am not fallen below Thy reach. The truth is, a child of God has more hold of God, even in his lowest ebbs, than another sinner. As the spinner leaves a lock of wool to draw on the next thread, so there is left in the heart the seed of God, that springs heaven-ward. Though a saint be in a very dead frame, yet he is not twice dead, as wicked

men are. There is yet the root of the matter in the heart, that by the scent of water—by the heavenly dew of divine grace—will sprout again, and bring forth fruit. I attempt not to say how far men may fall, and whether a true saint may not be brought back to the bare principles of grace as they were at first infused, and lose degrees of grace obtained. But sure I am that Christ prayed for Peter—and so for all believers—that his faith might not fail; and Him God always hears. I am, therefore, firmly persuaded, that the seed of regeneration, with those fundamental gifts, without which spiritual life cannot subsist, is kept safe and entire; for the same Holy Ghost that infused that seed, has imparted to it an incorruptible virtue, and perpetually cherishes and maintains it. Mary's better part shall not be taken away. The fear of God, implanted in the hearts of believers, keeps them from fatally departing from God. They have constancy in their hearts, and perseverance in their hands. Holy resolutions produce successful performances; and thus does the treasured Christian hold on in a Christian course, till these smaller measures of grace end in the vast ocean of glory.

CHAPTER VI.

SELF-EXAMINATION RELATIVE TO THIS TREASURE.

Let us now proceed to apply the foregoing truths more closely to our own souls. Is it so, that a good treasure in the heart, is necessary to a good expenditure in the life? Then it stands us all in hand to try ourselves, and to dig deep into our own hearts, to see if we can find a treasure there, with respect both to sincerity and degree of grace. O be assured that you are beggarly souls unless you have real grace! Graceless souls are the only treasureless souls; and I fear there are more than a good many, that could never experimentally distinguish between nature and grace, and therefore are increasing guilt, and heaping up wrath. O Christians! see whether you have the true riches. Try what proficiency you have made for grace, and in grace. You have long had a day of grace, and you must be accountable for all opportunities. Cheat not yourselves with counters instead of gold. Bristol-stones may make as fair a show as pearls. True grace is a rare and rich commodity. Thousands that are empty, ima-

gine they have a treasure. Proud, conceited professors are apt to boast of their attainments, whilst some contrite, humble souls, are apt to bear false witness against themselves, by denying what they have. "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." Sounding vessels are often empty, and still waters are usually deep. Vaporing chapmen jingle their money in their hands, whilst sober tradesmen keep it in their chests. You shall find more of a merchant's goods in his warehouse, than in his shop-window. So it is with a sober, serious, and judicious Christian. His glory and treasure are most within; whilst vainglorious mountebanks in religion set all upon the stage. I entreat you, read those books that lay down the marks of true grace; hear and attend the most heart-searching ministry; take much pains in descending frequently into your own hearts; and the God of heaven make you serious in a thorough search.

To aid you in discovering whether you have laid up a treasure of holy thoughts, proceeding from scriptural truths, graces, comforts, and experiences, ask, I beseech you, your own hearts these four questions—How came you by it? How do you value it? How do you use it? How do you increase it?

1. Let me ask you, and do you ask yourselves, if you pretend to such a treasure, How came you by it? Men usually know how they get a treasure. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich;" that is, through "the blessing of the Lord" upon diligent endeavors. Men that would be rich ply the oars, run to markets and fairs, travel from city to city, to "buy and sell, and get gain." They traverse sea and land, compassing the world to possess a small portion of it. But what are you doing in spiritual things? Where are your thoughtful cares and painful hands? Though labor will not get this treasure,—for it is the gift of God's free grace—yet it will not be had without labor. God's ordinance must be honored. It is the immutable decree of Heaven since the fall— "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." And this holds equally good in regard to the soul. "Labor for that meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." Man's endeavors are wholly consistent with God's free grace, and Christ's dear purchase. God will be found in His own way. He ordinarily conveys the first grace in and by His own institutions; but seldom will a soul attain to a treasure, without a long trading in the royal exchange of holy duties. Diligence hath the promise of increase. "And unto you that

hear shall more be given." Has, then, the care of your hearts put labor into your hands, and travel into your feet, to repair to the markets and fairs of public and private ordinances, to get a solid treasure? Have you both digged and begged for it? Where are your sweat and agony? Has Jesus sweat blood to fit you for heaven, and have you not gone through one earnest struggle to get an interest in Him, and possession of His grace? O the pangs of conscience, and sad pantings of a convinced sinner, to obtain a portion in these riches of grace! Never did a poor laborer toil so hard for his day's wages, as an humbled soul to be filled with Christ. A treasure of money is got with sweat and toil; or is obtained from alms, with weary steps and loud cries: but if thou be too idle to dig, and too proud to beg, thou art without a treasure, and mayest pine away in everlasting poverty.

2. How do you value this treasure? "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." A man's thoughts, cares, and affections will centre upon his treasure; for he accounts his treasure the best thing he has. No man would willingly part with his treasure. Thus Naboth tenaciously adhered to his hereditary possession. The wise merchant in the Gospel parted with all he had to purchase the "one pearl of great price." Paul

accounted his gain to be no better than loss for Christ; nay, as mere offal, in comparison with his sweet and satisfying Saviour. All the world is as dross to a Christian, when it obstructs or obscures the grace of Christ. Is it thus with your souls? Do you account your spiritual portion your only riches? The truth is, the riches of the soul, and the riches in the soul, are the very soul of riches. That, I confess, is a meretricious love which prizes receipts from Christ more than the person of Christ. But here I understand Jesus Christ to be the marrow and essence of this treasure, and all these as ensuring evidences of interest in Him; for all that the soul hath is wrapt up in Him. Well, then, let me question the most dark and doubting, if sincere, Christian. What sayest thou, poor soul? Wouldst thou quit thy share in Christ and spiritual treasures, for a crown and kingdom? Wouldst thou not answer, No? Wouldst thou cast away thy trembling hope of acceptance with God, to be delivered from the infamy, poverty, and persecution, which sometimes attend the zealous profession of Christianity, and to live in honor, pleasure, and worldly delights? Surely thou wouldst answer, No. Wouldst thou change thy present low, afflicted, and conflicting state, for thy former carnal, but confident condition, or for the pompous, prosperous state of graceless sinners?

I dare say thou wilt answer, No. Yet, again, art thou not willing to part with thy dearest bosom lust and earthly enjoyment, for a true immortal treasure in heaven and in thy heart? I am confident an upright heart will answer, Yes. And if I mistake not, this, if not only, yet chiefly, is the very separating point betwixt a sound Christian and a rotten-hearted hypocrite. The one chooses Martha's many things; the other Mary's one thing needful. This is, indeed, a discriminating mark; for a gracious soul will cry out, "None but Christ, none but Christ; give me Christ, or else I die; give me Christ, and I shall live. Christ is my life, my crown, my joy, my all. If I have Him, I have enough; without Him I have nothing." When one asked Alexander where his treasure was, he answered, "Where Hephæstion, my faithful friend, is." Just so will a pious soul say—"Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand." I prize Him above my life, who loved me unto death; and I count that of great value which evidences my interest in Him. As the marigold opens to the morning beam, so does the heart of a sincere Christian to the Sun of Righteousness. Take an instance in Moses, who chose the bitterest cup of affliction, rather than the sugared cup of sensual pleasures, that he might enjoy Christ. Observe the strange disparity that appears to car-

nal reason in such a choice. On the one side, there was suffering; on the other, enjoyment. In the one course of life, the despised people of God would be his companions; in the other, the ruffling gallants of Pharaoh's court. Yet, in the latter case, it was for a season, and but for a season, and this *but* turned the scale. These, however, were only pleasures. Let *treasures* be presented to him, and they may perhaps prevail. No, no, he esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The worst of Christ is better than the best of the world. The noble Marquis Caracciolus, being tempted with large offers to depart from Zion to Babylon, resolutely replied, "Let their money perish with them, that account all the treasures of the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ." If all the mountains were gold, the rocks pearls, and the whole world filled with the sweetest delights of the sons of men; and if these were offered to the Christian to be his proper inheritance for ever, on condition of his renouncing the Saviour, he would trample on them, with a holy scorn, and look on them as not worth one glance of his eye, in comparison with one taste of the love of Christ, and a grain of saving grace in his heaven-born soul. But a carnal heart sees no beauty in Christ, that He should be so desired, nor is it taken with the

comeliness and excellency of grace. Of this we have a sad, yet striking example in the hopeful young man that bade fair for heaven, yet when he saw it would cost him so dear as to part with all, he would rather go without it than forego his estate for it. This is a pinching point! Look well to it. This one thing, employed for examination, will pierce betwixt joint and marrow, and a day of trial will discover what you account a treasure.

3. How do you use and improve this treasure? Habits of grace are no otherwise known than by their acts. What better is a man for that which he uses not? A talent of grace of the right stamp will not be confined to a napkin, though gifts may. To manifest sincere grace, is as necessary and as evidential, as to possess it. Things that are not, and things that appear not, are both alike. He is a wicked man that boasts of his heart's desire, and he is a fool that trusts in his heart. Yet many will say, "I have as good a heart as the best, though I do not talk so well with my tongue, or work so much with my hands. I have as good a meaning as any of them all, though I cannot make so great a show. I love to keep my religion to myself. None know how good I am." It is not denied, but degrees of modesty, fears of vain-glory, and jealousies of apostacy, may restrain

some Christians from the open and bold avowal of their principles. Yet there may be a deception here. Let such know, that where fire is, it will betray itself, by heat or smoke. It is impossible that real grace should be hidden or stifled. Though there be only a smoking flax—even the wick of a candle, that affords little light and much offensive smell—yet it will appear. Truths and graces in the heart will be, as the word was to Jeremiah—"a burning fire shut up in the bones," that cannot be concealed. He that is full of matter is constrained, by the internal workings of the Spirit, to vent it; else it is like Elihu's new wine that hath no vent, and bursts the new bottles. It is as natural for a gracious heart, so far as it is gracious, to talk and walk holily, as for a living creature to breathe and move. It cannot be otherwise, and it must not be otherwise. Your treasure within ought to be laid out. For what else has it been given you? Profession with the mouth is as necessary, in its kind, as believing with the heart. Our light must not be "hid under a bushel," but "shine before men," that it may produce comfort to ourselves, have influence upon others, and receive approbation from the Lord. So, then, if thou hast a treasure within, thou wilt witness a good confession, and thy conversation will be suitable to thy profession. Thy trading will answer

to thy stock. The text tells you, "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things." And I have shown you that the manner of laying out this treasure consists in holy meditations, savory expressions, suitable actions, patient bearing, and profitable improvement, of afflictions. Now, then, lay judgment to the line, and compare your own course of life with these practices of religion. How do you trade with heaven, and for heaven? What do you more than others? Where is the life and power of religion? Do you indeed exercise yourselves to godliness? What large expenses do you lay out for that God from whom you have such liberal incomes? When we see men lay out abundance of money in household goods, housekeeping, building, and recreations, we infer that such have a good stock beforehand, a great yearly revenue. Thus it is here. Though many make a great show of what they have not, yet a ready, real, uniform, and constant performance of duty—a serious, sensible course of walking with God—the steadfast exercise of grace in all conditions—give evidence of a suitable inward treasure. What say you to these things? Can our hearts witness for us, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity," by the assistance of grace, "we have had our conversation in the world?" Can our relations and

neighbors witness for us, that we have served the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations? Can our closets, chambers, shops, and fields testify our secret groans, meditations, self-examinations? Have we performed our relative duties with all care and conscience—as magistrates, punishing sin—as ministers, faithfully preaching at all seasons, suitably to all persons—as householders, instructing, correcting, and leaving a good example—as husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants? That man is not good at all, who is not good in all relations. Does the treasure of grace and truth prompt our tongues, employ our hands, guide our feet? Do the doctrines in our heads, and the principles in our hearts, dictate to us our duty, and assist us in doing it? Are we fruitful in good works, words, and meditations? And are we useful in our generation? Let us not deceive ourselves. It is not a conceit of some good meanings within, that will serve our turn. The Apostle tells us roundly and plainly, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." Acts evidence the state, and a man cannot be good, unless he do good.

4. How do you increase this treasure? "To him that hath shall be given." The reality of grace is the prologue to growth in grace; and growth in grace arrives at full strength of grace. The saints

"go from strength to strength." The true Christian, like his Master, "increaseth in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." These waters of the sanctuary rise up to the ancles, knees, loins, neck, till the soul come to the head, Christ—and so be swallowed up in the unfathomable ocean of glory. Dwarfs are monstrous in grace, as well as in nature. It is a sad sign that you have no grace, if you think you have grace enough. He was never good that desires not to be better. They are hypocrites, and sure to be apostates, that are contented with a taste. The true believer is insatiate, still hungering and thirsting after righteousness; daily adding one cubit after another to his spiritual stature, that he may be a tall man in Christ, and at last attain to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Never will he be satisfied, till he arrives at a full maturity in knowledge and holiness. What say you to this? Are you any better than you have been? Are your last works more than your first? What light of knowledge in saving truths, what heat and warmth in sanctifying graces, what heart-refreshing experiences and comforts have you laid up? Have you become more solid, humble, holy, watchful, faithful, fruitful? Do you get more power against your lusts, and more ability to walk with God? Do you forget what is behind, and press forward to

perfection? Are you stirred up more to holiness, and strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man? Are you still sensible of defects, craving for more spiritual riches, as a beggar for alms? I confess I have sometimes wondered at this strange paradox in Christianity, that nothing so fills the soul as grace, and yet nothing makes the soul so hungry for more grace as a principle of grace. Nothing contents but a taste of grace, yet a taste of grace will not content. Believers desire more knowledge, more faith, more love, and, accordingly, they are still perfecting holiness in the fear of God. So that, as the apostle says of some, their faith groweth exceedingly, and charity aboundeth even till it become a treasure. For observe, this spiritual treasure is made up, and increased by accumulation,—by adding more graces, or strengthening graces already conferred.

Many good books have been written to satisfy scrupulous souls in this important particular of growth in grace. Let such as have doubts of their own sincerity read them. It would be a digression here to speak fully to this point. A single observation must suffice. The more life you have added to your light; the more humility to your graces; the more watchfulness to your lives by your experiences; and the more tenderness of conscience,

and cheerfulness in holy performances by your comforts;—the more have you grown in grace and increased your treasures: and thereby have given a clearer evidence that you have indeed a spiritual treasure in your hearts.

CHAPTER VII.

NEGLECT OF HEART-TREASURE REPROVED.

If it be so necessary to have a treasure within, that the Christian may be fitter to walk, speak, and act holily, then this falls with weight upon the head of four sorts of persons, namely—careless loiterers, vain-glorious boasters, impious offenders, and unprofitable Christians.

1. It admonishes careless loiterers, that sleep out the fair summer day of grace, and forget the day of their visitation. Many ministers have cause to weep over their people, as Christ did over Jerusalem, and say, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." If any are without grace, amidst precious means of grace, let such tremble lest the misimprovement of ordinances end in the loss of them. If thou hast sat under the droppings of the sanctuary, and art yet barren, be afraid, lest God either command the clouds to rain no rain upon thee, or the curse of the barren fig-tree be pronounced against thee,—"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever,"

or else, "cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" O have your souls been till now empty of grace, amidst ordinances which are the channels of grace? Have you lived thus long in Goshen, and are you yet in Egyptian darkness? Where is the fault? What can you say for yourselves? Suppose God should put you to it, to bring forth your strong reasons, as he expostulated with the man that wanted the wedding garment,—and should say, "Friend, where hast thou lived? In my Church? And didst thou not there hear of a rich wardrobe provided for naked souls, even the fine white linen of Christ's perfect righteousness? Was there not a well-furnished shop and storehouse of the gifts and graces of my Spirit to fill and adorn the house of thy heart? How comes it, then, that thou art so destitute of what is good? Hadst thou lived in Turkey or India, where I did not set up such an office of mercy, thou mightest have more to say; but now what apologies canst thou make? What fig-leaves canst thou find to cover thy shameful nakedness, or palliate thy wretched negligence? How camest thou hither? What canst thou say to excuse thy brazen impudence, that darest approach such a presence in so sordid a habit, or rather miserably naked?" Though witty sinners can find shifts enough to put off the appeals of ministers, and silence the clamors

of conscience, yet how can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong, when God shall deal with them? Their mouths will be stopped in speechless, self-condemning astonishment. O consider, if yet thou be without a treasure of grace; and rather ask thyself some heart-awakening questions, than that God should put to thee such alarming interrogatories. Say thus, to thy soul, "My poor pining soul, how is it with thee? What hast thou been doing, and for what wast thou sent into the world? What must become of thee? What provision hast thou made for an eternal state? Where must thou lodge, if thou die this night?" Here let me propose to you a few solemn considerations.

If thy soul be yet without a true gracious principle, thy condition is miserable; for thou hast no assurance of any more means to obtain it, nor of living another day to hear another sermon, or of receiving grace to make the means effectual for thy soul's good. Hast thou stood out so long, and dost thou now presume upon a longer day? Must the earth be forsaken for thee? And shall God leave His ordinary road to do thee good, step aside to meet with thee? God sometimes does so; but what ground hast thou to expect it, that hast abused grace so long?

Is not this emptiness of good a dreadful sign of rejection? "He that hath a froward heart findeth

no good." Nothing does him good, neither word nor rod. May not you sadly fear judicial hardness, to punish wilful negligence? One would have thought, if any good had been intended for you, that you would have been possessed of it before this. It is a black brand of reprobation to live long under melting ordinances, and be still hard and dead.

Wilful neglect is an act of disingenuousness towards God, cruelty to your own souls, and the ready way to banish ordinances from posterity. What? must God always hold you a candle to play by? "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" Be sure, if Satan find you idle, he will set you to work. Negligence is a sad prognostic and preparative for eternal torment; and the greater your ease now, the greater will be your torment hereafter. Shall the God of heaven always heap kindness upon offending, grace-abusing and refusing wretches? No, no; when love hath said its errand, justice will act its part.

Your lost advantages will prove your bitterest torment. All men must be judged according to their privileges; and wilful loiterers shall be punished according to their contempt of gospel opportunities. Gospel despisers shall account poor heathens comparatively happy, though their com-

panions in eternal misery. Their bright sun of gospel grace shall set in thicker darkness, and greater treasures of wrath shall be poured into those vessels, that shut out treasures of grace.

2. Another sort to be reproved, are empty and vain-glorious boasters, gilded hypocrites, that pretend to a great treasure, but are sorry beggars. Popish priests will tell you that they have merit enough, both for themselves and others; that out of the abundant treasure of their good works, they can furnish defective souls on earth, and deliver tormented souls out of purgatory. But believe them not. They would make merchandize of souls, and draw them to delusions and damnation. Jesus Christ is our only treasury. There is nothing like merit in any mere creature. Angels in heaven stand by grace, having their confirmation through Christ; and sure I am, that they have no merits to spare. The wise virgins could not furnish others; but a boasting friar pretends he can, though the most of his seeming good works will rather prejudice himself than profit others; since they generally spring from that vain will-worship, which is coined in the mint of a superstitious brain; which makes the commands of God of none effect; and which can only provoke the Lord's wrath against those who promote and practise it. But suppose a man could obey positive commands,

in practising all Scripture duties, and avoiding all sins; yet wherein has he to glory? Is he not still an unprofitable servant? Does he give to God any thing but His own? Is it not a debt due? And is it by his own strength, or by the strength of God? And can he do what he does, perfectly, without the least tincture or stain of imperfection, or of defect? Let any mere creature show, if he can, such good works as these, and let him climb up to heaven on Acestus's rotten ladder; we are resolved to ascend on Jacob's ladder. Let others trust their own merit; but let true Christians depend on grace. Let us repose all our trust on the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, rather than on the tottering foundation of man's best righteousness, which is but a filthy rag, and will rather defile us than cover our nakedness.

But I principally design to rebuke such persons, as hypocritically and histrionically act the part of kings and emperors, while they are despicable upstarts; that pretend upon the stage of their fair profession to coffers of gold, and precious treasures of grace; but, when followed into the withdrawing-rooms of privacy, are found to be wofully destitute of all saving good. These poor souls conceit with counterfeit graces to purchase heaven, and by making lies their refuge to be secured from wrath. But, alas! the God of heaven sees their false coin

and self-flattering hearts. "All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits." O how many hearts and ways would be found light and wanting, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary! At the last day, it will be seen that there are wonderful self-cheating conceits and confidences. There are many false hearts under fair vizors; but when these vizors are plucked off, all shall appear in their own colors; and O what strange sights will then be seen! When wicked men's foul insides are turned out, certainly they will be very abominable. Though now every cunning hypocrite carries himself so closely that none can detect him; yet a time will come that shall bring every secret thing to light, and discover the guile of the deceitful usurer in religion, who thinks to truck for heaven with his stolen wares. O how much better is a poor soul than such a self-deluding richling, who thinks he is something, yet is nothing, and so deceives his own soul, plays the sophister, and puts a false syllogism upon himself! How many are in a golden dream, build castles in the air, and fancy they are kings; but when they awake out of their revery, they find themselves miserably mistaken! Solomon says, "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." That is, he that pretends to give or receive what is not

real, but counterfeits either, renders himself ridiculous among men and odious to God. Our Lord Jesus "cursed the barren fig-tree," to manifest his displeasure against hypocrisy. Hypocrites are the most hateful of all persons. They are hated by wicked men for seeming good; they are hated by God and good men for but seeming, and not being truly good. As the fruit of hypocrites is like the apples of Sodom, that look fair with a beautiful skin, but touch them and they are dust; so the end of hypocrites will probably be like that of Sodom, which God overthrew as in a moment. They will be patterns to others of a peculiarly dreadful destruction. Hence the fearful emphasis of the phrase, "appointing a portion with the hypocrites."

But here comes in a carnal, sensual sot, and applies all this to the zealous professor, and will needs condemn him for a hypocrite, because he makes so great a show; while he accounts himself a sincere saint, because he conceits his heart to be good. Such a censure is contrary to Scripture, and such a conceit is contrary to the very sense and experience of mere pretenders to religion. For they may find, and God's children feel, that the heart is the worst part of the whole man; it is a man's ignorance of it that makes him imagine it to be the best. The truth is, no man will com-

mend this common cheater, but he that knows it not; for it is known to be "desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things," or a supplanter, as the word imports, that would trip up the heels of the Christian, and cheat him of his prize and reward. If ever thou be undone, it is thy heart that will undo thee. Thou dost brag of thy heart; alas, poor soul, thou hast cause to bewail it, and to be afraid of it; and if conviction open thee a window to look into it, thou shalt see a monstrous, dreadful sight, that will make thee out of love with thyself, and cause thy heart to ache, if it do not break, with godly sorrow. As for the children of God whom wicked men condemn, for making so great a show, I shall say but this, that it is the most bare-faced uncharitableness in the world, to judge contrary to what we see; yea, it is a blasphemous assuming to a man's self, the property of God's omniscience, to pretend to search the heart, and to say, the thoughts of the heart are opposite to the profession of the lips, and the practice of the life. The Lord rebuke such railing Rabshakehs, as condemn all the generation of God's children, and that too, because of their holy, world-condemning conversation. These moles cannot endure the light of saints' paths. Hence they say, "I warrant you, these precise walkers are no better than their neighbors. If the truth were known, they

are a company of dissemblers, and are rotten at the heart. Pharisee-like, they make clean the outside of the cup, and condemn others as profane." And then they bind it with an oath that they are as bad as themselves! And if a professor slip into an open sin, then they are confirmed in their censures, and conclude, "they are all alike—a pack of dissemblers!" And now the holiest saint—he who hates sin, and mourns for it as his greatest burden—shall have his brother's miscarriage dashed in his teeth for ever. But if a man might argue with these sottish, yet censorious souls, in a rational way, what could they answer? Are not they themselves worse than the loosest professors, and how far short do they fall of close-walking Christians? Should all be condemned for the sake of one? And should we not judge according to what we see, or can attain to the knowledge of? Is not the tree known to us by its fruits, and not by its roots, which are invisible to us? May the Lord set these vain boasters a work in searching their own hearts, and examining their "ownselves, whether Christ be in them," as Paul directs the Corinthians in this very case. This will cure their censorious spirits, and find them work enough to do at home. For as the eye that looks most abroad sees least within, so the most uncharitable censurers are the most empty, unprofitable profes-

sors: wheras a Christian that has most grace himself, judges best of others. And mark it well, they that groundlessly judge others to be worse than they see apparent cause, will be judged by others in like manner in this world; and are in danger of a sad and just censure and sentence at the dreadful day of judgment. "What then is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

3. Another sort that should be admonished, are impious offenders, impenitent sinners, that verify the latter part of the text, and run a course directly contrary to the good man. "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." How should it be otherwise? Men must needs act as they are. It was a proverb of the ancients, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." Such as the fountain is, such must needs be the streams. The fruit is answerable to the nature of the root and tree. The working forge of men's evil hearts sparkles forth evil imaginations. Why are men so wicked in their lives? It is because they are more wicked in their hearts; for the cause is always greater than the effect. O how many vassals of Satan and vessels of sin are replenishing and preparing for wrath! For as a good man's treasure prepares him to do the more good, so too many are filling their souls

with guilt, and hardening their hearts by custom in sin, that they may be vile with less remorse, and swallow down iniquity as the fish drinks in water. They cauterize their consciences, and twist a strong cord of customary sinning, that they may draw iniquity with cart-ropes, and do evil with both hands earnestly, so that their hearts may not smite them with a sense of remorse. As the scholar that Dr. Preston speaks of, who had committed such a scandalous sin, that he could not rest by reason of terrors of conscience; and being instigated by the Devil to commit the same sin again, in order to obtain quiet;—did so, and afterwards could sin without remorse: in like manner, many persons have imprinted an impudence on their foreheads by constant sinning, so that at last they are "past feeling, having given themselves over to all lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The word, "past feeling," imports remorselessness, senselessness, like that of a member benumbed or seared; and this comes with custom in sinning, according to the well known truth, that the practice of sin takes away the sense of sin. We are apt to wonder at the horrid abominations that break out. But if we consider the prodigious wickedness of an atheistical heart, we may rather wonder that there is no more profaneness in the world. If the tongue be a world of iniquity, how

many worlds of wickedness are there in a wicked heart? Not a thousandth part of the corruption which dwells in the human breast, appears outwardly. Surely, did not God set bounds to men's raging lusts, the world would not be habitable for the saints. God restrains that wrath which will not turn to His praise, and the advantage of His people; and when wicked men have belched out as much rage as they can, there is a remnant yet behind. We are fallen into the dregs of time, and iniquity abounds. The world is full of atheism, pride, uncleanness, swearing, drunkenness, gluttony, blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, contempt and scorning of religion. Men break out, and blood toucheth blood. But were there a casement or perspective whereby a man might look into a carnal heart, O what a filthy sink of unheard-of sin, and full nest of odious vipers, might he behold! Certainly it would be the most dreadful sight in the world—far worse than to see the Devil in his ugliest hue. We may well stand wondering at the fathomless, bottomless depth of wickedness in the heart of man. "It is," says Luther, "the treasure of evils, the fountain of poison, the head and original of all iniquity." Every man has that in his heart which he cannot believe to be there, but which yet may and will break out in its season, as in the known instance of Hazael. The truth is,

the seed and spawn of all heresies, impieties, and blasphemies, are in our nature. Greenham has forcibly said, "That if all errors and the memorials of them were annihilated by the absolute power of God, so that there should not the least remembrance of them remain, yet there is enough in the heart of one man to revive them all again the next day." And I may add also, that the same is true as to profane practices. The wickedness that is in the world does not proceed from imitation of Adam's sin—as Pelagians dream—at least, not from thence only; but also and chiefly from the propagation of original corruption to all his posterity; for there is an inherent depravity entailed upon us and transmitted to us from our first parents, which has its regency in the heart, and its activity in the life. The fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans will stand firm against all Pelagian and Socinian adversaries, proving that both Adam, and Christ, our Second Adam, communicate to their seed that which is their own, both by imputation and propagation. The first Adam distributes impurity, guilt and death; the Second gives grace, righteousness, and eternal life. It will remain as an undoubted maxim and a sad experience, that there is a constitutional deviation of our whole nature from the law of God; so that there is a universal corruption of the entire man—

of the understanding, conscience, will, affections, and all the members of the body. And this original sinfulness is not in some men more, in some less, but in every man equally, as all men equally inherit from Adam the nature of man, and are equally the children of wrath. And the reason why some are more civil, others outrageous, proceeds from God's bridling some and leaving others. And truly, restraining grace is a choice mercy, in its kind, else what would not men do? The truth is, the origin of sin is within. "Every man," says the Apostle, "is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed of his own lust." Here, lust is represented as the father. "And lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin." There, lust is represented as the mother too. "Hence," as Reynolds well observes, "there is no sin but might be committed if Satan were dead and buried. Original sin is virtually every sin. And could one kill the Devil, yet you cannot name the sin that original depravity would not entice a man to commit. Suppose it possible for a man to be separated from the contagious company of wicked men, and out of the reach of Satan's suggestions, nay, to converse in the midst of renowned saints, yet that man has enough in himself to beget, conceive, bring forth, and consummate all actual sins." Well, then, let all men behold the foul face of

their hearts in the pure glass of the law of God, and they will see a strange and astonishing spectacle, which would end either in evangelical repentance or final despair.

There is a necessary and profitable sight of sin, which drives the soul out of itself to Jesus Christ. O labor for that! Take the candle of the word, and go down into the dark dungeon of your hearts. Search yourselves, lest the Lord search you as with candles. Know and acknowledge the plague of your own hearts. Be not afraid to know the worst of yourselves. It is better that we should set our sins in order before us, for our humiliation, while there is a hope of pardon, than that God should set them in order before us at the great and last day, for our eternal condemnation. We may say of an impenitent sinner as the prophet said of his servant, "Lord, open his eyes," and surely he shall see a troop of lusts. The mountain of his proud heart is covered with monstrous armed sins, that fight against the soul. O that the thoughts of your hearts may be discovered, pardoned, and purged out, lest, by wilful sinning, you heap up "wrath against the day of wrath," and your souls perish for want of a treasure of grace, and by reason of this dreadful treasure of sin and guilt.

4. The last sort of persons that fall under the

lash of a sharp and just reproof, are unprofitable Christians, who, though they be sincere in the main, and have the root of the matter within them, still have not yet gained this treasure. Alas! there are none of us but have too much bad, and too little good treasure in our hearts. We cannot but know all the wickedness to which our hearts are privy; and cannot our consciences discover an emptiness and vacuity of good? O what a chaos of confusion is in our hearts! And whence comes this? Have we not had means of gathering a large treasure? What have we done with all our ordinances, sermons, sacraments, mercies, afflictions? If we had been diligent, we might have furnished our souls with truths, graces, comforts, and experiences. What could have been done more for us? And have we a treasure proportionable to our enjoyments? Whence then are we so unfit for duties, and so untoward in their performance; so slight, dead, and trifling in religious exercises; so unprepared for ordinances, and so unprofitable under them; so unthankful for mercies, so discontented under crosses; so weak in resisting temptations and subduing corruptions; so unwilling and unprepared for the communion of saints? O! whence is it, that we are so apt to sit loose from God; are so little fit for fellowship with Him; and so much at a distance from Him?

Certainly the reason is obvious—we have not such a treasure as becomes saints. Especially, the great reason why we are so little skillful in the heavenly duty of meditation, is, the want of a treasure of holy thoughts. When we are alone we cannot fix our minds upon a heart-affecting subject, or, at least, cannot pursue it, till our hearts be deeply affected; but our thoughts are off and on, very inconsistent, incoherent, and vagrant; like the rambling discourses of a madman, the ranging motions of a spaniel, or "the eyes of a fool, that are in the ends of the earth." We run from object to object in a moment, and one thought looks like a mere stranger to another. Were our thoughts patent; or were an invisible notary, acquainted with them, to write them down, and repeat them to us; how should we blush and be confounded in the rehearsal! It is recorded of Dr. Potter, that hearing the fellows of the college talk of trivial things, he said nothing; but after they had done talking he thus addressed them. "And now, my masters, will you hear all your extravagant discourses, for I have strictly observed and marked what you said." And he told them every whit. So suppose some one should present to our ears or eyes a relation of our wild imaginations in one hour's time, what a strange medley of nonsense would there be! "The Lord know-

eth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." When we have summed up all the traverses, reasonings, and discourses of the mind, we may write this at the bottom as the sum total. "All is vanity, nothing but vanity; yea, vanity in the abstract." And what is the reason of all this, but a want of the fore-mentioned treasure—a stock of truths, graces, comforts, and experiences.

I shall conclude this subject with a few considerations for the conviction and humiliation of unfruitful believers.

1. Are not these spiritual things worth hoarding up? Look about you, through the whole creation, and see if you can find any thing better of which to make a treasure. David says, "I have seen an end of all perfection." All outward enjoyments are a scant garment, that cannot cover us, or rotten rags, that are soon worn out. But one part of this treasure, that is, God's commandment, is of large extent. Hence it is said, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." It reaches from heaven to earth, from great to small, to all sorts of sinners, to all the faculties of the soul, to and through all eternity. Thus long and broad is the Christian's treasure. Where then can you mend yourselves for a treasure? Spiritual blessings have all dimensions of perfection. They are the cream and flower of all blessings. No other trea-

sures can avail in the day of wrath. If heavenly things be not worth looking after, what are? Should not spiritual persons set their hearts on spiritual riches? Are not these most suitable to your immortal souls, and spiritual principles? Have you not been married to Christ, and can you be content to be without any part of your dowry? Are not you risen with Christ, and should you not then seek after things above? Are not the things of God great things—things of eternal concernment? And did you not prize them at a high rate at your first conviction? And was not this your motto,—"I seek not, I pursue not mortal things, temporary, fading enjoyments; but things immortal and divine?" And are not these as much worth inquiring after now as formerly? Yes, certainly, these do not decay through age. It was the matters belonging to the old covenant, or legal dispensation, that decayed and waxed old, and so by degrees vanished away. New covenant mercies are the "sure mercies of David," and they are always fresh and green. Hence the Church says to Christ her Spouse; "Also our bed is green:" that is, our mutual delight in each other is lively, sweet, and satisfying,—never glutting, as earthly delights do. He that drinks of these living waters shall never thirst after the muddy waters of earthly comforts; but shall more ardently thirst and pant

after the living God. Look then to it. There is nothing worth desiring but this heavenly treasure. If you can find any better, take it, and much good may it do you; yet brag not of your bargain till you see the issue.

2. Are you in any danger of having too much of these things? Surely there are no superfluities in the internals of religion. In the outward part too much may indeed be done. In some respects one may be "righteous overmuch;" that is, in either a self-willed, superstitious way, or else in such an unseasonable or prolonged performance of religious duties, as to tire out a tempted soul, and run the Christian off his legs. But of inward graces, sanctified knowledge, and real holiness, there can never be an overplus or excess. Whilst you are on this side heaven, you will be short of perfection. Let sottish worldlings say, with Festus, that much learning makes professors mad. Let us study to increase and abound more and more in knowledge, faith, love, humility, experience; as Paul pressed forward, if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead, forgetting what was behind, and reaching forth to what was before. Moses's ark had staves for re-removing further—Jacob's ladder had rounds for ascending higher; so Christians must sing the song of degrees in this world, and should seek to

be renewed day by day. We must not be satisfied with present attainments, but work hard to increase them to a treasure. We must strive both for fullness of grace and fullness of joy. It is possible that a Christian may attain to a full assurance; yea, to that joy which is unspeakable, and to that peace which passeth all understanding; and he may even think that he has enough. I have heard of a good man who enjoyed such an abundant tide of comfort, that he desired the Lord to stay His hand, lest the vessel should break. Though this is not ordinary for every believer, nor at all times for any, yet instances of it may have occurred. There may, therefore, be some saints who have as much comfort as they desire. But I never read or heard of any that had too much grace, or so much as they desired. All have bewailed their defects, living and dying; and the best men have been most covetous of divine things, young and old. It is said of good Mr. Herbert Palmer, that when he was of the age of four or five years, he would cry to go to his mother, that he might hear something of God. And of old Grynæus—a godly German divine—it is recorded, that when some persons were discoursing by his death-bed he lifted himself up, saying, "I shall die with more comfort if I may die learning something for the good of my soul." Now,

dear reader, who or what are you? Are you wise enough, good enough? Are you afraid of being too like God, or of having too much of God in and with your soul? Are you loth to get too ready for, or too readily into, heaven? Alas, alas! you may well call your state in question, if you say, you have grace enough, or are good enough, or if you slacken your endeavors to get more grace, upon a conceit that you need no more. It is as natural for a living saint to call for grace as for a living child to cry for food. Insatiable desire after grace, is a clear test of the reality of grace. O shame thyself, then, for thy neglect, and humble thy soul for thy non-proficiency!

3. Do you certainly know what treasure you may need? When you go a journey you take money enough, because you cannot tell but you may be put to extraordinary expenses; and truly, in your journey to heaven you may be put to unexpected charges. You little know what a day may bring forth. It may bring forth a burden for your back. God may call you to sharp service, in the way of duty or of difficulty. You are sure to go through a purgatory to glory. The way to heaven is strait and narrow, and you must crowd hard to get in. Through manifold temptations and tribulations you must enter into the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." It is an irre-

vocable decree of Heaven, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We have had fair weather hitherto, but the greater storm is behind. We have not yet "resisted unto blood," but we may be put to it. Be assured, that so long as the Devil is in hell, and Antichrist on earth, there will be persecutions raised against the Church, in some part of it or other; and the dying blows of these doomed adversaries may prove the heaviest of all. Woe to those who are unprovided for that sharp day! O what piteous shirking will there be to save the skin, and damn the soul! O Christians! get furnished for this encounter. We little know whom it may reach, or how long the storm may last. You need to be "strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness," lest, if your patience be short, and your sufferings long, you may fail in the way, and fall short of your crown. What a sad plight are those seamen in that have made but a scant provision, and meet with a long voyage. It was a good saying of Mr. Dod, "That this is the difference betwixt a Christian who is provided for troubles, and one who is not; that to the one they are but blows on the harness, but to the other they are blows on the flesh." Ælian tells us, "That in Lybia men slept with their boots on, because of the scorpions, that they might not

sting them." We have need also to be well "shod," or booted, "with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" that is, with a disposition and resolution to walk in the most thorny way, and through the stinging company of wicked men, that we may "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." It behoves us to count the cost in the profession of religion. We do not know what God may call us to do or to endure. Great services require great strength. That we may neither be weary of, nor weary in, the Lord's work, we need a large fund of inward grace and strength. We must lay in much, that we may lay out much for God. We know not what God will call us to use. When the Israelites were to go out of Egypt, Moses instructed them to take their cattle, and not to leave a hoof behind, because they knew not with what they must serve the Lord, till they came to the appointed place. In order that they might be thoroughly furnished, they also borrowed jewels; and the Egyptians, as Lightfoot remarks, were the more willing to lend them, since they themselves were decked with jewels, that they might be more acceptable to their deities. In like manner, we do not know with what sort of graces or truths we may be required to serve the Lord. Let us, then, strive for all instituted qualifications, that we may be so supplied and adorned, that the Lord may

take pleasure in us; and that we may go through services and sufferings with glory to God, credit to religion, and comfort to our own souls. Those are unwise Christians who seek not to be furnished for all the emergencies of their spiritual course, since no man knows what he may need.

4. Neglect herein is a dishonor to God, and a disparagement to the treasures of grace. "Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day," said Jonadab to Amnon. And well may I ask the weak and sickly children of Zion, Whence proceeds your leanness? Is there not meat enough at your Father's table? Is there not store sufficient in your Master's treasury? Do you not disparage the means of your supply, and bring an ill report on the good land? God is not a hard master, but distributes liberally an abundant dole of grace. Why, then, are your souls in no better condition? The reason is not in God, but in yourselves. "You are not straitened in Him, but in your own bowels." Now, as a recompense of His love and munificence, "be ye also enlarged." It eases God's heart, if we may so speak, to be constantly communicating His goodness. It pleased Him infinitely from eternity, to think of expending riches of grace upon sinners in time. But He can be perfectly and perpetually happy without you. It chiefly concerns you to fetch all from Him, that

you also may be happy in the enjoyment of Him. Are you afraid of being happy? Who, but foolish man, would forsake his own mercies? Shall God set up an office of grace in Christ, and will indigent souls take no notice of it? You cannot grieve Him worse than to neglect His infinite condescension and tender affection. If a mighty king should open his treasure, and bid men come and bring their bags, and take as much as they desired, do you think they would neglect this occasion of enriching themselves? Surely not. They would rather fetch bag after bag, and with the poor woman in sacred story, borrow vessels that might contain larger treasures. The God of heaven has made a glorious proclamation, announcing to all a free access to the precious treasures of mercy. Do you question whether He intends as He speaks? God forbid. Or do you fear that you may not be welcome? Why, you are most welcome when you come for the greatest share. Do you fear that unworthiness will hinder you? A sense of unworthiness will help you to be capable of greater receipts. Do your fear these treasures will be exhausted by the myriads of souls that are supplied from them? Know, then, that the exchequer of Heaven is as rich this day, as it was when Christ was first promised, or the first man saved. These riches of grace have an inexhaustible spring. Distribu-

tion does not impair their fullness, no more than the sun's shining robs it of its innate and native light. O then, why are our souls so poor and pining? The Lord humble us because we have no more, when there is so much to be had in our all-sufficient treasury.

CHAPTER VIII.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DESTITUTE.

I COME now to inquire, how the soul may be furnished with a rich and suitable heart-treasure. The examination of this question will be useful both to sinners and to saints; and although it is to the latter that I principally address myself, yet, because the treasure of true grace is absolutely necessary, I shall lay down some few directions for the graceless soul, that it may attain that spiritual character, in the absence of which it cannot bring forth one good thought, word, or work. This is the inward principle without which there can be no gracious acts; the root, without which there can be no fruit to God. This is that stock to trade with, without which there can be no transactions with God, or true heaping up of the forementioned treasure of sanctifying truths, spiritual graces, heart melting experiences, or heart-cheering comforts. It is, indeed, true, that the Divine Spirit can alone produce any vital and saving change in the heart. All truly gracious affections are of heavenly extract and origin. Yet we are to

wait upon God in the use of appointed means. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure." This test both confutes the speculative free-willer, and convinces the practical loiterer, that grace is to be had from God in His way, though it is not purchased by man's working. I shall, therefore, propound these seven directions to poor graceless souls—involving as they do plain, practical duties.

1. Withdraw from the world. Learn to sequester yourselves, at certain times, from the cares of business, and the distractions of company. Do not think you can hoard up in a crowd. Satan loves to fish in troubled waters, but so does not Christ. The noise of Cain's hammers, in building cities, drowned the voice of conscience. A man will best enjoy himself alone. Solitude is of singular advantage, both for getting and for increasing grace. "Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." In this you may and must be separatists. Let me advise you—and, O, that I could prevail at least thus far—to treat and entertain yourselves by yourselves. He is a wicked man, and resolves to continue so, who dares not entertain himself with discourses about spiritual subjects and soul affairs. It were more safe to know the worst, be-

fore you feel the worst. Let your solitary thoughts be working about things of eternity. Accustom yourselves to secret and serious pondering. I have read, that the father of a prodigal enjoined it on him, as his death-bed charge, that he should spend a quarter of an hour every day in retired thinking, but left him at liberty to think of what he would. The son, having this liberty to please himself in the subject, sets himself to the performance of his promise. His thoughts one day recall his past pleasures; on another, contrive his future delights. But at length, becoming inquisitive to know what might be his father's end in proposing this task, he thought that, as his father was a wise and good man, he must surely have intended and hoped that he would some time or other think of religion. When this had leavened his thoughts, they multiplied exceedingly, neither could they be confined to one short hour, but followed him incessantly, till he became seriously religious.

O you little know what good effects a serious consideration may produce! God propounds it, and men have practised it, as the great expedient to begin and promote repentance. Consider for what you came into the world; whither you must go if you die this moment; what a state you were born in; what is the need and nature of regeneration; what the worth and price of your immortal

souls; and, through God's blessing, these thoughts may leave some good impressions.

2. Be at a point concerning your state. Be exact and impartial in searching your hearts, to find out your state. Trifle not in this great work of self-examination. Be not afraid to know the worst of yourselves. Make a thorough and critical heart-anatomy. Try whether "Jesus Christ be in you." As the goldsmith brings his gold to the balance, so do you weigh yourselves in the balance of the sanctuary. Judge not of your state by the common opinion of others concerning you, but by Scripture characters. Bring your virtues to the touchstone; pierce them through, to try whether they be genuine graces or moral endowments. See whether your treasure be that "gold that is tried in the fire." O how many are deceived with imaginary felicities and empty flourishes! Take heed of being put off with gifts, instead of grace; with conviction, instead of conversion; with outward reformation, instead of saving sanctification. This is the undoing of thousands. Why will you not use as much diligence for your souls as you do for your bodies or estates? If your body be in a dangerous disease, or your estate at hazard in an intricate suit, you will run and ride, and make friends, and pay any money, to know what shall become of them, or to secure them:

and are not your souls of more worth than a putrid carcase, or a dunghill estate? Press yourselves with such serious questions as these:—"Heart, how is it with thee? Art thou renewed? What life of grace is in thee? Are thy graces of the right stamp? Whither art thou going?" And be sure that you get distinct and positive answers. Let not thy treacherous heart dally with thee. Be not put off with general hopes and groundless conjectures. A man is easily induced to believe what he would have to be true. But rest not there; try further; make it out how it comes to be so; detect and answer every flaw in thy spiritual state. If thou canst not do this thyself, make thy case known to some able minister, or experienced Christian. Tell them how things are with thee; beg advice; ask them how it was with their souls; and thou shalt find much help in this way. Yet after all, suspect thine own heart; call in aid from heaven; desire the Lord to search thee; and be willing to be sifted to the core, searched to the bottom. David is so intent upon this, and so afraid of a mistake, that he uses three emphatic words, when praying for the Divine inquisition. "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart." The first word imports viewing as from a watch-tower; the second, a trying, or finding out a thing by questions, or an inquiry by signs or tests; the

last imports such a trial, as separates the dross from the gold, or the dregs from the wine. So the Christian should desire to be tried and purged, that grace may appear true, sincere, and solid. To be without such a thorough sifting, is as much as your souls are worth. Take, therefore, the most effectual course to clear your state to yourselves, and be not put off with any answer, but what will be accepted by God at the great day.

3. Mourn over your empty hearts. If you find things not right in your own hearts, lament your state, and cry out with a loud and bitter cry, as Esau did when the blessing was gone. Lament and say, "Woe and alas that ever I was born! that I have lived thus long without God in the world—a bankrupt at my first entrance into it, and ever since a spiritual beggar. O what will become of me, if I die in this state! There is but a step between me and death, and the next breath I breathe may be in everlasting burnings. It is a wonder I have not been hurled into hell before this. What shall I do to be saved? Is there any hope for such a wretch as I am? O that I could bathe myself in briny tears of evangelical repentance! O how shall I believe in Jesus Christ, that I may receive remission of sins!" Never will you be filled till you are sensible of soul-emptiness. Spiritual poverty is the preparative to true soul-

plenty. Gospel sorrow expands the soul, and so capacitates it for grace. The oil of grace is poured only into a contrite heart. The kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit; and we know that the best benefits of this kingdom are internal, as "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and that these as a rich treasure replenish the penitent soul; for it is the sorrowful soul which God replenishes. Endeavor, therefore, to discover the nature of sin, and the danger to which it exposes you, with the wrath of God hanging over your heads. Were you pricked in your hearts with a pinching pain, you would be restless till you had obtained an interest in Jesus Christ. Were your souls weary and heavy laden, you would not be content till you had laid the stress of all upon an infinite Saviour. If the Lord would help graceless sinners these two steps, to see that they are yet graceless, and to discern their misery in being so, that were a hopeful gradation towards conversion. Did you see your state, you could not but bewail it and seek for a change. And did you see the precious nature of the soul, and that grace which is to fill it, you would not be another day without it.

4. Empty thy heart of all corruption. O cleanse that filthy source of all sin, and purge thyself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit. Shake hands with that sin which forbids the banns of marriage

between Jesus Christ and thy soul. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset thee," and then lift up thine eyes and heart to Jesus Christ. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Empty this dirty house of thy heart, that the King of Glory may come in. Throw out the Devil's household stuff, and make room for a new Inhabitant. The vessel must be emptied, or it can never be filled with saving good; for that which is within, hinders any thing else from entering; and, alas, the heart is full of vain conceits, and worldly thoughts, and impure lusts, which keep off good emotions, and keep out good dispositions. Now, "if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Let me entreat you, for the Lord's sake, and for your own soul's sake, to search and sweep every dusty corner of your defiled heart Let not this train of graces and treasure of truths be always waiting your leisure, whilst you are wallowing in the puddle of sin, and swallowing down the Devil's sweet, but dangerous pills of soul-murdering temptations. O be willing to make this blessed change, to part with thy base lusts for a precious Christ; to forego soul-damning corruptions for soul-gladdening dispositions! If you cannot put off the

whole body of sin, yet you may cut off its members. You ought indeed to pluck up sin by the roots; but, if you cannot do this, you may at least lop off its branches. You may abate sin in part by contrary actings. Knowledge removes ignorance, as light dispels darkness; grief abates pleasure; fear restrains boldness in sinning; patience daunts passion; and fasting tames unruly lusts. These you may do, and these may be good preparatives for this treasure. When the strength of a fever is abated by depletion, a man is disposed towards health; and ploughed ground is at least materially prepared for seed. And though God is not bound then to sow the seeds of saving grace, yet thou hast encouragement, that thy labor shall not be in vain. Use these means and try the issue. Endeavor to "cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light;" yea, labor to "put off the old man, and to put on the new." At least, do what you can to wash your hearts from filthiness, that your vain thoughts may not lodge within you, and that you may have a saving treasure of holy meditations.

5. Be gleaning in God's field; be filling your sacks in the divine granary of ordinances. The way for Ruth to be well laden was to glean in Boaz's field, among the sheaves near the reapers. The Patriarchs must have recourse to Joseph's

storehouse for provision; and where may we expect supply, but in gospel ordinances—those channels of grace; the door-posts of wisdom; the garden where such precious spices grow; the orchard where the soul may be loaded with the fruits of righteousness? Ordinances are the Lord's camp, where this heavenly manna falls. They are the green pastures, where we may fill and feast our souls; the galleries where the King of heaven takes His walks, and where the Christless may meet with Him. They are like Solomon's house of the forest of Lebanon, built for an armory, where the naked soul may be furnished with shields and spears, with offensive and defensive weapons to fortify it against the fiercest onsets of the great Abaddon. If your souls be sick of love, here you may find flagons to revive your fainting spirits, dispensed by the Lord's stewards. If you sit under this apple-tree, its shadow shall give you great delight, and the fruit thereof will be sweet to your taste. O, then, seek Christ in the broad ways of public ordinances, and "go forth by these footsteps of the flock." Search for this pearl in the field of gospel dispensations, and your souls shall be truly enriched. It is through the golden pipes of these ordinances, that the precious oil of grace is conveyed to us from the fruitful olive, Jesus Christ. O do not leave off ordinances, like some

conceited professors that boast they are above them; for if you set the cistern above the cock, it will never be full. Cherish, therefore, a reverent esteem for the Lord's appointments. Attend them, with constant steps, and a prepared mind. Live still within the sound of Aaron's bells, and beg of God that Aaron's rod may bring forth the buds of grace in your immortal souls. "The rod of Aaron," as one well observes, "may signify the ministry, effective, as to the results it produces, by the blessing of God; bringing forth buds, blossoms, and ripe nuts, all at once: that is, precious buds of grace, blossoms of heavenly joy, and holy fruits of righteousness and new obedience." Let me especially entreat you to wait upon a heart-searching ministry, that the secrets of your heart may be made manifest, and that conscience may be pricked. Be not afraid of a Boanerges, but gladly welcome the sharp rebukes of your soul's friends; it may be fittest for your sleepy or seared conscience. It is said of the almond tree, of which Aaron's rod was, that the rind of its fruit is bitter, but the kernel very delicious, and the oil pressed out of it very medicinal and healing. Just such are the chastising words of a round-dealing ministry; bitter at present, but profitable afterwards. And it is worthy of being observed, that they are ordinarily the soundest Christians

who are trained under the most plain and pungent preaching. I entreat you, therefore, to lay yourselves directly under the hammer of the word, that the Lord may fashion you according to His will.

6. Study and improve free grace. O let your thoughts dwell much upon God's infinite condescension to poor sinners, and the unlimited invitations which He addresses to them. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." There is no bar to your admission, but what yourselves make. Christ Jesus includes you in gospel tenders. O do not exclude yourselves. The great Shepherd calls His sheep by name. How can He do this but by speaking expressly to their case? It is as if He should strike the troubled sinner upon the shoulder and say, "Here is comfort for thee." What if thy name be not expressly mentioned; yet the proposition is universal—"he that believeth shall be saved." Millions have ventured their souls upon such a word, and never any miscarried that cast themselves into the arms of Christ. You have no reason to doubt acceptance if you come to Him. You have all the grounds of encouragement imaginable. Should a physician offer a cure to all that would come, it were madness to stand off and say, I know not whether he intends it for me. If men were ready to perish in deep

waters, and a boat should be offered to carry to land them that would come into it, it were an absurd thing to dispute whether it be for us. If a pardon come from the king for a company of condemned prisoners, and they may all have benefit by it, if they will but accept it; what madman would refuse it, and question whether the prince intend him particularly, when his name is included in the general grant. Surely men would not so fondly cast away themselves in temporal things; and who would be such a fool in the everlasting concernments of his soul? The way here is not to dispute, but to believe. Is not Jesus Christ the Physician of the soul, and are not we sick? Is not the gospel design of grace a plank after shipwreck, and are not we drowning? Are not we condemned malefactors at the bar of God's justice? And does not God graciously tender to us the redemption so dearly purchased by our precious Saviour? Why then should we forsake our own mercies? Why will you be cruel to your own souls? If it were in temporal things, you would put out the hand and be very ready for receiving. If you sit at a feast, and there stand a dish upon the table that is agreeable to your palate,—though all the company be free to make use of it,—yet you say, "Here is a dish for me;" and you think it good manners to feed heartily upon it, without

scruples and disputes of being welcome, since you were freely invited by your generous friend. Our Lord Jesus hath made "a feast of fat things," and has bidden His guests. He invites you to eat and drink abundantly. O do not excuse yourselves from coming to this gospel feast. When He invites, do not question whether He means as He speaks, but fall to, and make a long arm, and take your share of this provision. I can assure you, He hath not an evil eye; He doth not grudge you this heavenly manna; nay, rather than your souls shall famish, He freely gives you His flesh and blood, to nourish and save them. You, that have torn His flesh with the teeth of cruel persecution of Himself and His members; you, that have trampled upon His blood with the feet of an odious and abominable conversation—you, O yes! you He calls to "eat His flesh and drink His blood," by faith in Him, and improvement of Him, that your souls may live. To you that have despised riches of grace, treasures of grace are opened. You that have fought against Jesus Christ all your days, with all your might, He invites to be His soldiers; and He will graciously entertain you as if you had never been in rebellion against the King of kings! Will not this melt and move you to yield yourselves to your dear and loving Lord? I beseech you, take these things into your

serious thoughts, and accept of Jesus Christ. Dream not, however, of application to Christ without separation from sin. Take a whole Christ, to sanctify thy heart as well as justify thy person; to purify conscience as well as pacify wrath. Take Christ aright; mistake Him not, lest you be wofully mistaken to your eternal undoing. You need a whole Christ, and a broken heart will not be content with a divided Saviour. It is the whorish heart that will divide; a sincere soul must have all; it needs grace as well as peace. Indeed, there is nothing of Christ useless. Every part of this Lamb of God is of absolute necessity to the indigent soul; and true faith takes Him in all His mediatory latitude. It is as dangerous to divide Christ believed on, as the heart believing. Stir up yourselves, therefore, to a due consideration of free grace, and to a right application of it.

7. Be humble petitioners at a throne of grace, and beg hard at the gates of mercy for a large dole of heavenly riches. Ask; if that will not do, seek; if seeking avail not, knock—and you shall be sure to prevail. The choicest riches of Heaven may be had for asking, and if they be not worth that, they are worth nothing. God loves importunate beggars. There is the fullest liberty of petitioning in the court of Heaven. It is no bad manners there to heap suit upon suit. The oftener

you come, the more welcome you are. "He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him;" and that is a great thing in God's account, and should be in ours, for it enriches the soul with an abundant treasure. O beg for the Spirit of God! Open your mouths wide, and He will fill them. We should think ourselves made forever, if we might have all we could ask: yet we cannot ask so much as God is able and willing to give. Stir up yourselves, therefore, to desire grace. Open the windows of your souls. Lift up yourselves to God on the wings of desire, and fetch a treasure from heaven into your hearts. Strong desires are real prayers, and shall prevail; for they not only capacitate the soul for grace, but lay it directly under the promise. Desires are the pullies of the soul, that wind it up to heaven; and desires are the appetite and stomach of the soul, by which it receives heaven. O, then, pray hard. Do not you see and hear, at your door, and in the road, poor beggars urgently pleading for alms, and backing up their pathetic cries, by showing their sores and nakedness? Go you and do likewise. Fill the ears of God with mighty cries. Take no denial; give Him no rest, till you have your share in spiritual blessings. Tell Him that you will not be put off with the transient heritage of this wicked world; that crowns and golden mines are crumbs

cast to dogs; that He hath something better than these for His children. Tell Him thou comest to Him for a child's portion; and that if He will but give thee a treasure of grace in thy heart, and reserve a treasure of glory for thee in heaven, thou wilt refer all worldly things to Him, that He may dispense them as He pleases, giving thee less or more, any thing or nothing. Tell Him that He has often entrusted these talents of grace to great sinners; and if thou art worse than any that ever received them, yet tell Him, that He does not sell these precious commodities to the deserving, but gives them to the unworthy; and that thou art one that needs as much as any. Tell Him, thou never yet heardst that He refused to give them to any who sought them above worldly treasures, with a broken heart, and for Christ's sake. Tell Him, that Himself hath promised, His Son hath purchased, His Spirit will freely convey these riches into thy heart; and that if He will but speak the word, it shall be quickly done. Tell Him, yet once again, what a monument He will thus raise to His own glory; and that, if He fill thy soul with this treasure, He will thereby make known the riches of His glory on a poor vessel of mercy. And whereas thou art now a useless vessel, in which the Lord can have no pleasure, and from which He can receive no profit or honor·

yet, if He will be pleased to replenish thy soul with saving treasure, He may then take delight in thee, and rest in His love towards thee; for when He hath blessed thee "with spiritual blessings in heavenly things," then thou wilt be "to the praise and glory of His grace." Thus come; thus pour out your hearts before the Lord; lie day and night at the throne of grace; and think not that any seeking, however earnest and protracted, can be too great for the blessing of eternal life. Will you not do as much as Esau did for his blessing? He took pains to hunt for venison, that Isaac's soul might bless him, and missing it, he lifted up his voice, and "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry," redoubling his request with an affectionate echo, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" The words are very remarkable, and have an emphasis as striking as almost any that are to be found in Scripture. And will you be worse than Esau? O if you knew the wants of your souls, and the worth of divine things, your prayers would have another accent, and be put up with more fervency than they now are; and then you might hope to speed. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou

understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Before I conclude this topic, let me press on you the important advice of our Saviour. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." How forcibly do these words represent, by implication, the forlornness of your state, while you are without Christ! You may imagine yourselves possessed of every thing requisite to your happiness; but it is all a fond conceit and delusion. The Redeemer reproves your self-ignorance, as He did that of the Church at Laodicea, in the solemn declaration, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He heaps up many words to describe the aggravation of evils pertaining to an unregenerate state. The graceless man is "wretched"—pressed with sickness and calamity, overwhelmed with reproach, overthrown in conflicts, unable to stir hand or foot for God, being always overborne by his master, Satan. He is "miserable;" that is, though he stand in absolute need of divine help, yet he is destitute of it,

and unworthy to receive it. God will have no mercy on him while he remains impenitent. Is not his condition, then, most woful? He is "poor"—famishing with spiritual want, having no source of relief within himself, and cut off, by his unbelief, from all access to the inexhaustible supplies provided in the Gospel. Still farther, he is "blind"—blind to his own ruin, and blind to the means of his rescue. When a man is plunged in extreme necessity, it is a sad aggravation, if he knows not where to go for succor, nor how to go, nay, even knows not that he needs to go,—is undone, and perceives it not. But this is not all, nor the worst. To these terrible deprivations nakedness is added. The poor sinner is without the "wedding garment" of Christ's righteousness, having only a naked skin to shield him against the tempest of God's wrath, the curse of the law, and the goads of an angry conscience. Is there any poverty like unto this poverty? Let a man be the richest potentate under heaven, yet, if he be graceless, he is unutterably poor. No tongue can express, no mind can conceive, the destitution and misery of an unconverted sinner.

In the Hebrew language, there are seven words which signify poor, and they are all applicable to the man who is without Christ and grace. Amidst outward sufficiency, he is straitened by a griping

conscience, and an avaricious grasping after shadows. His goods are diminished, and he is become a bankrupt in Adam; vain inventions have wasted his fair estate, and daily weaken the relics of natural light. He is oppressed with intolerable labor, grinding in the Devil's mill, toiling in worse than Egyptian bondage, without any relief for his fainting soul. He is of a groveling mind, going, like the serpent, with his belly in the dust—a degenerate plant—the worst part of the moral creation—the basest of beings—the tail, and not the head. Besides all this, he is afflicted spiritually with suits, hatred, imprisonment, exile. God himself commences suit against him, hates him, banishes him from His presence, delivers him over into the hands of Satan, by whom he is led captive at his will. He is always needy; desires all things, but has nothing; cannot be content; snatching on the right hand and on the left, yet never satisfied; and longing, with unsated thirst, to quaff the deceitful waters of earth, that elude his lips, or only increase his cravings. He is empty of virtues, which are the riches of the mind; for although he may have some moral accomplishments, yet, in the absence of grace, they are but splendid and shining sins. He is, moreover, destitute of the world; for having with it God's curse, and not His blessing, it does him no good; nay, it is his bane, being

both a snare and a poison, aggravating his sins, enhancing his torment, and preparing for him a sadder account at the last day. Such, and worse, is the condition of a Christless heart. O who would tarry one hour in a state so horrible! The Lord be merciful to you, and pluck you out of the Sodom of unregeneracy, lest you perish eternally.

In contrast with this poverty and wretchedness of the wicked, impress deeply on your minds the wealth and happiness, which you are counselled to seek. And for this end, observe who is your Counsellor. It is Jesus Christ, who is, indeed, the only Counsellor, the Wisdom of the Father; who best understands the law of Heaven, and what will stand you in stead in the court of God. He, who died for you, opens His heart to you. He, that will speak to the Father for you, entreats you to make use of Him as your only Advocate. Consider, also, who and what you are, that are thus counselled; enemies to His grace, in whom He might glorify His justice, by casting you headlong into perdition; flagrant and obstinate offenders that have provoked Him all your days, and, in the service of Satan and of yourselves, have trampled His blood under your feet, and done despite to the Spirit of His grace. Yet even to you, so vile and ungrateful, behold, He pours out His words—nay more, offers to pour out His

Spirit. It is the voice of an infinite God to the sinful children of earth—"Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And then consider farther, to what He counsels you. It is to a rich and precious purchase. O ye great purchasers, here is a bargain for you! not of a paltry piece of land, but a kingdom—not an earthly, but a heavenly kingdom—not a fair house to live in here, but eternal mansions in the skies. Come, strike up the bargain; bid freely. But what must you give? Money, or money's worth? No, worldly treasures are dross here; money has no ascendency; the price is fallen to just nothing. Shall I say nothing? Something, however, you must give. You must give up your sins, and give God yourselves. Yet that is no price, because it bears no proportion to the treasures received. Grace and glory are God's gifts; yet He puts this honor upon such as honor Him by believing in His Son, and addresses them as though they had bought what He has freely bestowed. Let every soul, then, make this cheap purchase. But if it be so cheap, is it not of little value? No, no, the goods, which Christ offers you, are of inestimable worth, and are absolutely indispensable to your present and your eternal welfare. Here is "*gold tried in the fire.*" This includes, doubtless, the refined gold of Scripture truths, which we must by

all means buy, and by no means sell. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times;" and, therefore, David loved them "above gold, yea, above fine gold." I conceive, however, that in its present connection, the expression relates rather to the tried gold of Christian graces, and especially to faith, which, being tried in the furnace of affliction, is much more precious than gold that perisheth. This, indeed, makes the soul truly rich. As money answers all things, so faith will bring us through all conditions, and become to us the instrument of all blessings. It conveys to us pardon, justification, and acceptance with God, through the all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus; and it draws from the fountain of His intercession "grace to help in every time of need." This life-giving and life-sustaining principle is bestowed by Christ. Seek it, therefore, from Him; and having received it, look to Him constantly for its preservation and increase.

Here, also, is "*white raiment.*" Whiteness is the symbol of purity. The Roman candidates, when seeking public honors or offices, were accustomed to appear in the forum, clothed in long white garments, thus signifying that they possessed the integrity of character which such dignities demanded. In allusion to this practice, our Saviour

is represented as offering to clothe the guilty but penitent soul in "white raiment," as an emblem of its being justified before God, and made meet for the glory of heaven, "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." This priceless vesture consists of the outer robe of Christ's righteousness, appropriated to us by faith; and of the inner clothing of personal holiness, with which we become enduced by the transforming and purifying energy of the Divine Spirit. And of both these it is said, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame;"—lest, in the all-revealing day, the guilt and filth of his sins appear, to his everlasting ignominy and condemnation.

And here, too, is "*eye-salve;*"—a holy ointment to purge away the rheum and dimness of our moral vision. The inward illumination of the Spirit banishes from the soul the dark mists in which depravity has enshrouded it, and enables it to see clearly the state of our hearts, the evil of sin, and the excellency of the things of God. A right understanding of divine mysteries is the highest and best attainment. This is the only learning of lasting importance and value. No mere worldly knowledge is worthy of being named in comparison with it; for this "anointing teacheth you all things," in reference both to duty here, and to happiness hereafter.

I am loth, dear reader, to leave this subject, till I have prevailed with you to make it your main business to seek this divine treasure. O that Jesus Christ were formed in your hearts, and the life of faith begun within you! With this, you will be fit for all conditions; without it, you will be fit for nothing, and nothing will be fit for you. You will make no shift in a hard time, and you will know not how to improve happy times. The day of affliction will swallow you up; temptation will overthrow you; mercies will increase your guilt, and judgments drive you to despair. You cannot buckle to the easiest duties, nor apply the sweetest promises. In life, you will be without joy; in death, without hope. And how, then, will you come off in the great day of account? "To whom will ye flee for help, and where will ye leave your glory?"

CHAPTER IX.

DIRECTIONS RELATIVE TO HOLY PRINCIPLES.

My principal design is to furnish a directory for the people of God in the cultivation of inward religion. And because it is a business of the greatest moment to have and preserve, to use, improve, and increase this treasure of the heart, I shall dwell the more largely upon it, and arrange what I have to say under these four general divisions. First, By what means a Christian may be furnished with a treasure of holy principles; Secondly, In what way he may lay up truths, graces, comforts, and experiences; Thirdly, How he may preserve and increase this treasure; and, Fourthly, How he is to draw it out and make use of it.

In the present chapter, I shall endeavor to answer the first of these inquiries, How a Christian may acquire a treasure of holy principles? This is the "good treasure" chiefly intended in the text; and with a view to its illustration, I shall propose the following brief hints.

1. Labor to impress upon your hearts the reality and rarity of the things of God. Cherish a tho-

rough and abiding conviction that there are such things to be had, and that they are worth obtaining. You must look upon them as infallibly certain, and as incomparably excellent. Those ancient philosophers were accounted sensual and brutish, who, following Epicurus, placed the chief happiness of man in objects of sense, such as wealth, pleasure, and honor; while, on the other hand, they were esteemed the most sublime, and, in a sort, divine, who placed the highest good in what is above sense, or opposite to it—as the endowments of the mind, and moral virtue. If heathen sages, by the light of nature and reason alone, could see a reality and excellency in things invisible to sense—shall not Christians much more? It is a shame for one, who is favored with the light of revelation and the teaching of the Spirit, to be so blear-eyed, as not to be able to see afar off, and bring spiritual objects within the scope of his vision. It is alike the duty and the characteristic of a Christian, to look beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal. O could you as really discern, with a spiritual eye, spiritual good, as with your natural eyes you can behold natural good, what an advantage would it be to you! Could you make the mysteries and mercies of the Gospel as tangible and as attractive to your minds, as the bags and lands of a rich man

are to him, what an exceeding help would it afford you in overcoming the world, and in rising toward heaven! It was this which led Moses to forsake the visible glory of Egypt, and to brave the intolerable hardships of the wilderness; for "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Thus Christians must realize divine things, and account highly of them; since no man will seek to treasure up what is neither palpable to his comprehension, nor valuable in his regard. Indifference to the grace of the Gospel is the great reason why so many remain destitute of it. Thus, in the Parable of the Marriage Supper, those, who refused to come, are represented as making light of the invitation which had been tendered to them; or, as the word signifies, they would not give it a single thought, but deemed it unworthy of their notice. I am persuaded that unbelief, or the want of a thorough, settled, and effectual persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, and of the real good contained in its provisions, is the root of that gross atheism and willful neglect which prevail in the world. You must, then, give full assent to the certainty of divine things, and venture your souls upon the authority of Scripture. God's declaration must be to you instead of all the demonstrations in the world. You must take your stand on that impregnable rock, "THUS SAITH THE LORD;" and though

you may not always discover the reason of the things which you are required to believe, yet you are to account it a sufficient warrant, that God hath spoken them; for He cannot lie. He is too righteous to deceive—too wise to be deceived. On His word you may safely trust your immortal all. O that I could persuade you to do this! Do not put off these things with a slight notion, and a mere conjectural opinion, but advance "to the riches of the full assurance of understanding." This is a strong expression; but you cannot be too sure in matters of such infinite moment. Your staunchest confidence may be shaken; your firmest persuasion may stagger; and, therefore, strive to be as thoroughly grounded as possible, for according to the degree of your affiance, will your graces and duties ebb or flow, rise or fall. And not only must you believe the truth of eternal realities; you must also urge them upon your own hearts. As Paul said, so must you; "What shall we then say to these things?" Are they true, or are they not? Are they worth thinking of, or are they not? Have I an interest in them, or have I not? O my soul! let me press thee to the serious view of heavenly things. They are choice things, and well deserve thy study; rare things, wherein few have actual interest, and yet so absolutely necessary, that all must share in them, or be undone forever.

2. Reserve thy heart for God, and resign it wholly to Him. He claims it. "My son, give me thy heart." Let not thy dearest comforts, relations, or companions have a predominating influence in thy soul. The heart is the chief tribute that is due to God. Rob Him not of any part of it. Clip not the King of Heaven's coin. As lines converge to a centre, so should your affections be directed wholly and solely to God and things above. The Psalmist prays; "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name." The word, "unite," imports the making his heart one. He would not have a heart, and a heart. A divided heart is no God-fearing heart. He that would patch up a contentment both with God and with the creature, can have no solid treasure; for the creature cannot, and God will not fill such a heartless heart. Besides, love must centre in one object. Like a pyramid, it ends in a point. Affection is weakened by dispersion, as a river is diminished by being turned into many channels. You cannot serve two masters. He, who would have a treasure of any thing, intends that only; he contracts his affairs into a narrow compass, and makes that his one aim. So must you knit your thoughts together, and fix them upon this sole object. It is a dangerous thing to divide the affections between God

and the world; like the people of Judah, who sware by the Lord, and by Malcham, their king. But God regards that heart as not at all for Him, which is not altogether for him. Those nations feared not the Lord, which joined His worship with that of idols. There can no more be two chief delights in one heart, than there can be two suns in one firmament. Those hearts are winding and crooked that are like the haven of Crete, which lay directly towards two different points of heaven. Cyrus took Babylon, by dividing the river; and Satan will soon surprise us, if he can but divide our hearts. If our hearts are divided, we "shall be found faulty." O let us take heed of being voluntary cripples, and halting between two opinions. Let us not dismember ourselves by being half-hearted. God is infinite; Christ is complete; spiritual things are most excellent; and these deserve the whole heart. Resign yourselves, therefore, to God, resolutely, unreservedly, universally. As he that loseth his life for God shall find it; so he only receives his heart as good and worth having, who gives it to God; for He takes it to make it better. Thus even a heathen Socrates could not say to a scholar, who had nothing to give him but himself; "For this reason I receive thee, that I may restore thee to thyself improved in value." Give God your hearts, and He will fur-

nish them with a treasure. Commit your souls into His hands, and He will both commit a treasure to you, and will also keep that which you commit to Him, till the great day of His appearing. He will preserve both the case and the jewel, the body and the soul. The least atom of dust shall not be lost. How much more will He graciously preserve that good work of grace, and those fruits of the Spirit, which He has begun within you. I beseech you, then, to choose Him as your supreme portion. Keep no corner of your hearts for a stranger, but yield all to the Lord. Deliver the keys of your hearts into His hands. Let the King of Glory enter in, and His glorious train will fill the temple of your souls. He is a treasure wherever He comes. Christians are called God's temple, His house, His peculiar and dearly purchased habitation. It is, therefore, gross sacrilege to rob Him of His house, or to keep Him out of doors. "The soul of a believer," says Jerome, "is the true temple of Christ; adorn and furnish that; to that offer gifts; into it receive Christ." In a word, the sum and marrow of all true religion consist in a heart wholly dedicated to God, through the mediation of His Son, and the renewing work of His Spirit.

3. Live by faith upon Jesus Christ. The lively actings of faith upon the Mediator of the

New Covenant will fill your souls with a quickening and saving power. God has appointed Christ to be the store-house of His Church. Now, faith is the hand that brings supplies from Christ to the heart. By faith, the soul is engrafted into this true Olive, and draws fatness from it. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and still more of Christ is fetched in by faith. All the means of a Christian's life depend for their efficiency on the exercise of faith. Hence the righteous are said to "live by faith," because they are fed and nourished from Christ through the medium of faith. Faith empties the heart, and so makes room for Christ, and then lays hold of Him and compels Him to turn into the heart. And our dear Saviour is willingly conquered by the strength of faith. Faith is the key that opens the chest where treasures lie, and the hand that brings them into the heart. Faith opens the heart to receive riches of grace; and that man hath a closed heart, who has not the key of faith. O strive for a large measure of faith! The more faith you have, the richer you are; for faith is itself a precious treasure, and the chief instrument of endowing the soul with all spiritual treasures. Truths cannot be a treasure in our minds to profit our hearts, unless they are mixed with this vital ingredient. All the graces of the Spirit attend this queen of the graces. Experi-

ences cannot be gathered or improved without faith; and that comfort is but a fancy, which is not ushered in by the assurance of faith. Faith is the great bucket to draw water out of the wells of salvation, and the more faith you bring, the larger supplies will you receive. Would you have your hearts stored with a heavenly treasure? Strive, then, to increase your faith, and let the Lord Jesus be the direct object of your faith. It is He alone who hath the key of David, and can both open heaven to us, and a heavenly treasure for us Since the fall, we can have no converse with God, or communication from Him, but through the Mediator. "It is a terrible thing," says Luther, "even to think of God out of Christ." You must "honor the Son even as you honor the Father;" and as you believe in God, so must you also believe in Christ, the God-man;—that as our nature in Christ's person is filled with all that our souls can want, so from that fullness we may receive all things needful for us in time, and in eternity. O, stir up and quicken your faith! Come, poor soul, reach hither thy hand of faith, and thrust it into thy Saviour's pierced side, and there thou mayest feel, and thence fetch abundant fruits of love. "Be not faithless but believing." Do not dam up the channels of grace by unbelief. Do not forsake thy own mercies, by being shy and fearful to ven-

ture. Thou canst lose nothing,—thou mayest gain much by one single act of faith. O, one pure act of a lively faith will bring you in more treasure, than many hours tugging and struggling in duties and performances! Nothing in the world can shoot a bar, and bolt the door betwixt Christ and the heart, but unbelief. If thou believest, all things are possible; but unbelief hinders the workings and operations of grace. Away with all distrust; give full scope to faith; break through the doubts and questionings of thy unbelieving heart; lie low under the sad sense of thine insufficiency, and the sweet apprehension of Christ's all-sufficiency. Humbly stretch forth the trembling hand of thy weak faith. Though thou hast many misgivings of spirit, yet say, with tears, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief. I am no more able of myself to put forth one saving act of justifying faith, than I am to fulfill all righteousness, and keep the whole law; but the grace of the Gospel has undertaken to do that which it requires to be done. Lord, I roll myself upon Thee. I come to Thee by faith. Do not cast me off. Do not cast me out as a broken vessel, in which Thou hast no pleasure, but fill me with the abundant riches of Thy grace, which will redound to Thy glory, and my soul's abundant comfort." Thus do and prosper; thus believe, and be thou filled, poor,

wanting soul. "For whatsoever you ask believing, you shall receive."

4. Cherish in your hearts the grace of love. That noble grace is of an expatiating and extensive nature. Heaven is the fittest room for its exercise, and eternity for its duration. He that loves much will not be content with a little, and God will not put him off with a little. The more the soul is filled with love, the more it is filled with God, "for God is love," and can a man have a better treasure than God Himself? If you love God, "He will come in unto you, and make His abode with you:" and can the soul be more sweetly inhabited? Love makes room in the heart for more grace. He that loveth much, because much is forgiven him, shall enjoy yet fuller proofs of the Divine mercy. The love of Christ is, indeed, said "to constrain us"—to straiten and shut us in; but that is from other objects, that the soul may have freer scope for Him. This love diverts the affections from running in earthly channels, that it may pour them, in one united stream, upon the Saviour. It captivates the soul for Christ, and forces it to do and to endure all for Him who is the Fountain of its hopes and joys. It widens the arms to embrace Christ, enlarges the heart to entertain Him, and invigorates the hands to labor for Him. In the Songs of Solomon, Christ is de-

scribed as riding in a glorious and triumphant chariot. Whether this refer to His personal character, or to His mystical body—to His human nature, or to His Church, which He fills with His presence—I shall not venture to decide; but sure I am, that "the midst thereof is paved with love." A soul, decorated with the sparkling gems of love, is the fittest receptacle for Christ. He, who is love itself, most freely commits the largest treasure to a loving disciple; as He bequeathed His mother to John, when expiring on the cross; and, after His resurrection, unfolded to him, and to him alone, the destinies of His Church to the end of time. O how freely do a loving Saviour and a loving saint open their hearts to each other! How close, and sweet, and endearing is their communion! The pure flame of a saint's love mounts up to Christ, and there meeting with the heavenly Element of perfect Love, is kindled into yet more glowing fervor; and still these continued outgoings of love to God bring in successive incomes and enlargements of grace. Every act of love exhales away some corrupt vapor, and dilates the faculties of the soul, that it may be fit for the reception of more grace. Love, indeed, sets the soul on edge for more, and makes it as insatiate as it is unwearied in its endeavors to obtain more. "Faith worketh by love," as its hand to act for God; and

love works by faith, as its hand to receive all from God. Faith incites love to crave, and love engages faith to draw, fuller and still fuller blessings from the Infinite Source of all good.

And as love thus helps the soul to a treasure of graces, so it aids it in the acquisition of truth. Love to the doctrines of the Gospel leads the soul to look upon them as a precious deposit; to ponder them much and deeply; and thus to rivet and clench them in the mind by meditation. Love also prepares a man to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" to maintain it, to propagate it, and, if needful, to die for it. Hence, love is one of the hands by which we are to "hold fast the form of sound words." But he, who receives not the truth in love, will never regard it as a treasure, but will be ready to exchange it for a lie, or to barter it for a lust. Let me, therefore, entreat you to cherish this grace. Meditate much on the love of Christ. Let His love awaken yours; and when the spark is thus kindled, blow it into a flame. Content not yourselves with a low degree of love to God. Love Him with an intense, supreme, all-absorbing love. Let the measure of your love to Him be beyond measure. Let your hearts continually ascend to Him in the incense of holy desire. Love Him more than your enjoyments, more than your friends, more than yourselves.

5. Walk humbly with God. A holy deportment is the best means of spiritual culture. God communicates most to those who walk closest with Him. A master will entrust a larger talent to a faithful and a careful servant, for such a one is a credit to him, and promotes his designs. Bringing forth much fruit glorifies God and benefits men; and surely the Lord will dignify such fruitful vines with more care in dressing, and yet more of His blessing to help their abundant fruit bearing. They shall have clearer discoveries of God's will, who carefully do it; and such as keep His commandments have right to the tree of life, that they may come to it when they please, and eat abundantly, and live forever. There is an incomparable advantage in living near to God. In obedience to Him there is this reward, that every act of obedience increases the ability to obey. Every step reneweth strength. Saints go from strength to strength, for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright. Nothing at once so manifests and so increases grace, as a devout and holy life. As He, who hath called you is holy, be ye, therefore, holy, in all manner of conversation.

Let me also persuade you to be very humble. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Humility is not only a grace, but a vessel to receive more grace. The high and

lofty One stoops to the contrite and lowly heart. The King of heaven loves to walk upon this blessed pavement. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and such a soul is the fittest receptacle for the precious riches of this kingdom. Much of the riches of the ancients consisted in their garments. In like manner, a Christian's treasure lies much in his vesture. Of this, one part is the mantle of Christ's imputed righteousness, which covers all defects and imperfections. Another part is composed of inner garments, girded to the soul by the girdle of truth and sincerity. These are the garments of sanctification; one choice portion of which is humility. "Be clothed with humility." Humility is the sacred ligament which ties together the precious pearls of divine grace, and if this break, they are all scattered. Humility is the guardian and the ornament of every Christian virtue. Hence Basil calls humility "the magazine of all good." O that we all were walking humbly and holily with God! Then should we quickly have our hearts filled with this blessed treasure. Consecration, in the time of the law, was symbolized by filling the hand; but under the Gospel, he that is consecrated to God shall have his heart filled. Especially, shall they who are emptied of all self-conceit, be filled with much of God's fullness.

While the high mountain is bleak and barren, the low-lying valley is covered with rich harvests.

Humility is likewise the fittest disposition for receiving and cherishing divine truths. These choice grafts thrive best in a low ground. A meek heart will bid truth welcome; for it looks upon every truth as infinitely above itself, and is, therefore, prepared to fall down before it, in prompt and cordial submission. An humble believer owns the authority of God in His word, wherever he finds it, whoever brings it, so that even a little child may lead him by a single thread of Scripture. But proud men and truth can never agree; for they scorn to put their necks under the yoke of truth, and truth will not stay where it cannot rule. Those were proud men who would not obey the truth proclaimed by Jeremiah; and, therefore, the prophet must take down their crests before they could be right disciples of truth. And it deserves to be well considered, that a proud man is always a loser, in the account both of God and men, and in his natural or acquired accomplishments. The more he plumes himself on imaginary attainments, the more is he disqualified for real ones. The stomach may be so stuffed with noxious things, as to be incapable of receiving wholesome food, or of deriving nourishment from it. This, however, is not the fullness of health, but

the inflation of disease. Thus it is with the self-exalted soul. The swellings of pride shut out from it both grace and truth. O, then, be humble and self-denied. Entertain a lively sense of your own defects. Be nothing in your own eyes, and you will be much in God's. You will become temples for the High and Holy One to dwell in; and He will fill you with abundant grace here, and with glory hereafter.

6. Be much in prayer, especially in secret prayer. Pray fervently, and pray constantly. That is, maintain, at all times, a prayerful spirit, and lay hold on every fit season for its exercise. When prayer ceases, the work of religion in the heart stands still, or goes backward. All grace comes into the soul by this channel. It is of great importance, that you should observe set periods of prayer, and that these periods should be frequent. David and Daniel prayed three times a day, and in extraordinary cases seven times. It is not lost labor to be much on our knees. We cannot go to God more often than our wants require. Nor can we go more often than we shall be welcome, if we go aright; for the Holy of Holies is ever open, and our great High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us. There is a kind of omnipotence in prayer. The man, who is mighty in prayer, has a key to the very treasure-

house of heaven. His hand grasps the pillars of the eternal throne, and brings down into his own feeble heart the strength of the Infinite. He has power with God, and prevails. Hence it was said of Luther, that he could do with God even what he would. O, then, let me adjure thee to be constant and instant in prayer. What though thou seemest now to gain little thereby; yet wait on God still. Tradesmen will go to markets and fairs, and set open their shop doors and windows, though many times there is little present profit to be made. So let the Christian keep this market of holy duties, and frequent the celestial exchange, to see what good bargain he can meet with for his soul. Maintain uninterrupted your commerce with heaven, lest you lose it altogether. What though you often feel in no fitting frame for prayer; nevertheless, venture upon the duty, and try what God will do with you. It is the folly of our trifling hearts to put off duty when they want spirit for it, hoping to be in better tune at another time. But can one sin excuse another? Or can present neglect prepare us for future obedience? Will not disuse make us more and more loth to go to God? And, on the other hand, is it not a fact, verified both by Scripture and experience, that a dead and discouraged entrance upon duty will often end in sweet enlargements and ravishments of spirit?

Usually, a sincere and strenuous endeavor to overcome the reluctance of our souls, and force them into converse with heaven, will result in great freedom of access to God, and in close and refreshing communion with Him. God will bring near to Himself the soul that thus earnestly strives to reach Him. None ever lost their labor in struggling with their untoward hearts. O Christian! cease not from prayer, though you come hardly to it, and have much ado to keep at it, and must wrestle mightily to get any thing by it. Though with Jonathan and his armor-bearer you clamber up the hill, and fight when you mount the top; yet you shall gain the victory, and the spoils of such a conflict will be the most enriching. One sight of Christ, from the summit of Pisgah thus gained, will compensate a thousand fold the toil and difficulty of the ascent. And even should you not meet with God as you desire at that time, yet He may own and crown your endeavor to do so, as much as the most heart-melting exercise, because the former has in it more of obedience, and because conscience of duty is as acceptable a motive to duty as the sense of present recompense.

But, withal, maintain secret prayer. Enter often into your closet. God is wont to dispense His choicest blessings to the soul in its seasons of retirement. It was when Jacob was left alone,

that he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant, and prevailed. It was when Ezekiel was alone by the river of Chebar, and John in the isle of Patmos, that visions and revelations from heaven came to brighten their solitude. Solomon has, indeed, said, "Woe to him that is alone;" but, in a different sense, we may say, blessed is he that being alone hath God to keep him company. As our Saviour, when forsaken by His disciples, was not alone because the Father was with Him; so we, when most withdrawn from the world, have most converse with God. Separation from the engrossments of business, and from the din and bustle of society, leaves the soul more open to divine impressions; sunders the cords that bind it to earth; and gives it freedom to soar upward to heaven on the wings of holy aspiration. Be, therefore, much alone with God. Pour out your hearts before Him in secret places, and He will meet with you, and make many a solitary spot a Bethel to your souls, and surround it with the hallowed memories of divine communion. Think not to seek and find Christ in a crowd. He walks not in the dusty road of the multitude, nor amidst the noisy haunts of traffic, nor in the thronged paths of levity and dissipation; but on the lone mountain-side, by the silent shore, beneath the shade of overhanging woods; and there He best loves to meet

His followers, and cheer them with the tokens of His grace. O sweet and healing is secret prayer, when the heart, oppressed with a burden which none but God must know, and none but God can remove, retires with Him apart, and lays down the load at His feet, and pours all its anxieties into His pitying bosom, where no eye but His can see, and no ear but His can hear! There you may use postures, expressions, pleadings, that might not be suitable in the presence of others. There you may lay open those hidden wants and solicitudes, which you may not reveal to your dearest earthly friend. Let me, then, again urge you to go often in secret to God. Tell Him your whole heart; hide nothing from Him; plead no excuse from worldly business, nor even from other religious duties. Satan and your own depravity will find many occasions for diversion; but say to them as Abraham did to his servants, "Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship." Steal time from the world and its engagements, for frequent intercourse with God, and He will shed over all your outward walks the light of His presence and guidance. "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Observe such Christians as converse much with God in private, and you will see

their faces shine as did that of Moses, when he came down from his solitary communings with God in the mount. When Elijah sought to raise to life the dead son of the widow of Sarepta, he "carried him into a loft," and there prayed. So, when thou wouldst quicken thy dead heart, take it into seclusion, stretch thyself upon it, fall on thy face and pray, and the breath of spiritual life shall revisit it from on high. Cyprian has very beautifully described the benefit and delight which he found in retired prayer and meditation. "That no profane listener may hinder my musings, and no domestic clamor drown them, I withdraw to a recess in the neighboring solitude, where the creeping tendrils of the young vines form a shady arbor.—Behold! there I obtain a feeling of truth which learning could not give, and drink in, from the quick impartings of divine grace, stores of heavenly thought, which long years of study could never supply."

7. In order to obtain this treasure, strive to carry a spiritual frame into every religious performance. Be not satisfied with the bare outside of duties, or with trudging the common round of formality. If you look not beyond the outward use of ordinances, you will gain no real and substantial profit. He that would be spiritually rich must employ duties as a vehicle to bring his soul

to God, and to bring God to his soul. Every ordinance should be like the merchant ship that brings gold and gems from afar. The Christian must travel far beyond the Indies, even as far as heaven, to fetch a heavenly treasure into his heart. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." It is not a show of eating, nor merely a sitting at the table, that will satisfy the cravings of hunger. A pretence of trading makes not rich. He who stands motionless on a bridge will never get over the water. It is not the goodness of the bridge, but our progress by it, that carries us to the other side. A golden bucket will bring us no water, unless it be let down into the well. So the choicest ordinances will bring us no spiritual benefit, unless we find the Saviour in them. God's institutions work not by any inherent physical virtue, but morally, that is, by a careful improvement of them, and especially by the blessing of God with them. A man is not a good scholar merely because he went to school so long, and said so many lessons; nor is an ignorant Papist a whit the better for dropping so many beads, and pattering over so many paternosters. "Bodily exercise," says the apostle, "profiteth little." And in this he refers not only to recreations or superstitious usages, but even to scriptural ordinances when observed as mere forms. Such an

attendance on them will not advantage the soul. "But godliness is profitable unto all things." The devout, spiritual worship of God brings with it abundant benefits. True religious worshippers "sow to the Spirit," and, therefore, they "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," in addition to the inward refreshments which they reap in this life. Thus in "godliness," or the sincere worship and service of God, there is great reward both of present comfort, and of future glory.

But it is easier to be much in duties, than to be much with God in duties. If we had been as much with God as we have been before God, our religious state would now be very different. Job was persuaded that if he could find God, and come near to His seat, He would not plead against him with His great power, but would put strength in him. And truly, if thou couldst meet with God in duty, He would meet thee in mercy; and if God meet thee, He will bless thee, and fill thy soul with a glorious treasure of heavenly blessings. If thou draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to thee. Let me, then, persuade you to make conscience of earnestly seeking communion with God, and influence from Him, in all the public and private exercises of religion. You will lose much if you fail to have the Divine presence in these duties. You will take God's name in vain, and lose your labor;

nay, you will lose a blessing, and incur the curse of doing the work of the Lord deceitfully. But O how blessed is it to be able to say with holy Bernard, "I never come to God, but I meet with God; I never go from God, but I carry God with me." In all your approaches to God, therefore, study to be serious, devout, spiritual. That you may be so, carefully prepare your minds by previous reflection and self-examination. When you come before Him, give yourselves sincerely and fervently to the work of worshipping and praising Him. Watch your hearts; rouse up every sluggish feeling; recall every wandering affection; and let a sense of the majesty, holiness, and glory of the great Being in whose presence you are, absorb all your powers, and fill you with emotions of holy reverence and love. When you retire from communing with Him, diligently review the service in which you have been engaged, to see how it has been with your souls; to learn what light you have received, or what communications of strength and comfort have been vouchsafed to you. Happy will it be for you, if in tracing the connection between your obedience and your enjoyments, you can say as David did; "This I had, because I kept Thy precepts." What had he? A heart to remember God's name in the night—holy thoughts, and seraphic meditations on divine things.

Worship and serve God as he did, and you will be able to say, in reference to fresh experiences of the Divine goodness, these I received in such a duty or ordinance, and these furnish me with heavenly conceptions, and new matter for joy and praise. Never lose sight, however, even for an instant, of the great truth, that the Spirit of God alone can make ordinances effectual. Although the Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, yet, without His direct and special influence, the choicest truths, and the most impressive exhibition of them, will be but a dead letter. Invoke, therefore, the Spirit to breathe upon the garden of your souls, that the precious spices of divine grace may flourish, and diffuse their hallowed odors through your hearts and lives. Ordinances are empty cisterns, if God be not in them. But filled with His presence, they become vehicles of rich and saving blessings. O, then, seek to have God with you in every spiritual performance.

8. Make a wise improvement of time. Lose not a particle of this invaluable treasure. Fill up all your spare hours with some profitable employment in your general or particular callings. Cast not away the least filings of these golden seasons. You have wasted too much time already. Now redeem the remainder; engross this precious commodity; for the period is at hand when a single

moment may be to you of more worth than a world. Imitate such tradesmen as miss no opportunity of getting gain at home or abroad, by night or by day, by devising plans, or putting them in practice; only make use of present moments, and promise not to yourselves to-morrow, as worldly tradesmen are apt to do, and be sure that you take God with you, whom they forget and leave behind. Take Time by the forelock, for he is bald behind, and you cannot grasp him there. You little know what a day may bring forth. It may produce a burden of more duty, difficulty, or misery, than you have hitherto met with. To redeem time is the part of true wisdom; but the neglect of time has filled the last hours of multitudes with bitter and unavailing regrets. An apostle said, more than a thousand years ago, "The time is short." Much more may we say so, when now the ship is drawing so much nearer the harbor, when the sails are contracted, and the voyage well nigh over. "The end of all things is at hand." The world grows old and naught. Your own days cannot be long. This very night thy soul may be required of thee. Then a treasure for another world will stand you in infinite stead. O consider, often and solemnly, that this span of life, this inch of time, is the seminary of eternity, the prelude to an everlasting state! Lavish it not away in a brutish

prodigality. You will have little time enough when you come to die. A rich voluptuary, at death, cried out bitterly, "Call time again! O, call time again!" But time came not back at his bidding. Another offered a thousand pounds to purchase a single day. But, alas! time, once gone, cannot be reclaimed. The gold of Ophir could not buy back one misspent day. You have but your appointed time, and that is in the hand of God, and if you squander it, it is lost to you forever. The dead and damned may say of time, "We have heard the fame thereof with our ears;" but never more shall they behold it. When your glass is run, and your sun set, you will have no more opportunity to prepare and gather store for eternity; and therefore, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Be not like those silly "fishes that are taken in an evil net," because "they know not their time;" but live in constant readiness for the final and all-decisive hour, which may "fall suddenly upon" you. Let no day pass without drawing some line towards your great centre. You that are Christians have need to be "good stewards" of time. The holiest men have ever been the most careful of time, and they who have been the most fearful of losing even the

smallest portion of it, have attained to the highest eminence in religion. History and observation will alike show you, that the choicest spirits have always been most diligent in improving time. Some have accounted that day as lost, in which they had done no good either with tongue, or pen, or purse; and even heathens have bewailed, as spent in vain, the day in which they had performed no memorable action. How much more ought Christians to lament the loss of time? I once heard an eminent minister say on his death-bed, that nothing in the review of his past life gave him so much pain, as the thought of his lost hours. So it is with us all. We lose time, and then smart for it. Like the mole, which naturalists tell us begins to see at death, we open our eyes only when they are about to be closed forever. Let us, therefore, husband time well, while we have it, and study to lay up every day something which may contribute to the welfare of our souls, and increase our spiritual riches. Like Mary, let us be always receiving good, and, like Christ, be always doing good. Were we constantly thus employed, our treasure would soon be raised to a large proportion, and we should be sooner ripe for glory.

9. Strive to gather spiritual instruction from every thing. That man is likely to be rich, who is sagacious and prompt in turning all opportuni-

ties to good account. A wise tradesman despises not little things, for the multiplication of small numbers produces a great sum. They who willfully contemn the smallest good, will in time look upon the greatest as contemptible. Hence it is, that Christ says, "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." Thus should you collect and preserve those little things, which others cast away. Endeavor to gain something from every word, rod, or work of Divine Providence, whether it relate to judgment or to mercy. "Receive not the grace of God in vain." Hinder not your own proficiency by carelessness or inadvertence. Be diligent, and God will teach you to profit. See what you can make of everything you meet with. A wise physician can tell the virtue of every simple, and extract healing power out of herbs, which an ignorant person would reject as useless weeds. "Wise men lay up knowledge;" that is, they gather from every thing profitable refections, which they store up for future use. So must you do, if you would increase in solid and intelligent piety. Be not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is, by all that your eyes behold, or your ears hear. Learn to take lessons from all the creatures—to suck sweetness from every flower, not for sensual delight, but for spiritual profit. Not an event can happen which may not instruct you. Let not a

good or a bad report reach you concerning yourselves or others, without special observation and improvement. Whatever be your calling in life, you may and must spiritualize it, and make it a source of good to your souls. There is no proper occupation which may not assist us in the knowledge of God or of ourselves; so that we need never be at a loss for profitable subjects of thought, wherever we are, and however employed. Study to distil, by a heavenly chemistry, holy teachings from all the objects and circumstances which surround you. Every thing will do you good, if only your hearts are right. The sins of others will lead you to scrutinize your own standing, and to take heed lest you also fall. The afflictions of others will move your sympathy, awaken prayer, and call forth beneficence. The wrongs and indignities, which you may suffer, will discipline your patience, afford scope for the spirit of forgiveness, and summon you to a closer imitation of your blessed Master, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not," but met the rage of His murderers with the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus every scene of nature, every diversity of human experience, every unfolding of Providence, will be fraught with instruction, pointing you to God and heaven.

But, above all, labor to derive practical benefit from whatever you read in the Sacred Oracles. Scripture, well digested, will furnish you with matter for prayer, for private meditation, and for religious conversation. It will supply you with arguments against the sophistries of infidelity, with antidotes to the seductions of the world, and with directions and motives in every department of the Christian life. In order, however, that your study of the Scriptures may prove thus useful, you must not run cursorily over them, but let your thoughts dwell upon their meaning, and seek to extract their marrow and essence. These golden mines lie deep, and are reached only by deep digging. Most persons read the Scriptures, as travellers go over mountains full of precious minerals; they see the surface, but perceive not the sparkling wealth beneath. The mere words of the Bible, slightly considered, have no great efficacy; but their sense and purport contain spirit and life to the observant and studious reader. There is such a depth in the Book of God, that you may read the same passage a hundred times, and, at each time, receive fresh ideas and impressions from it. O then, learn to read, to ponder, and to digest this Book of books—this depository of all wisdom, both for "the life that now is, and for that which is to come." Thus will you be "enriched in all utterance, and in all

knowledge," and be "full of goodness, able also to admonish one another." Christian knowledge is fed by scriptural truth; Christian holiness is the counterpart of scriptural precepts; Christian graces are the accomplishment of scriptural promises; and if your comforts and experiences do not correspond to these, "it is because there is no light in you."

10. Maintain communion with the saints. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." The fellowship of believers is kept up by the social interchange of pious thought and feeling, and by the public ordinances of the Gospel. For the first, you are to observe the counsel of Solomon, to "walk with the wise." David professed himself a companion of them that fear God; and, though he was a great king, yet he esteemed the saints more excellent than all his mighty warriors and grave senators, and declared that in their society was all his delight. But it is not enough to be in good company, unless you improve it by profitable discourse. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." Men of profound thought and experience are apt to be silent, and must, therefore, be drawn to unlock their stores by appropriate questions; and to propound useful questions seasonably is an evidence of knowledge, as well as to answer them solidly.

"Doubts well raised do lock
The speaker to thee, and preserve thy stock."

It is our great loss that we make no better use of each other. Unimproved intercourse is the bane of Christian society. When we meet one another, and trifle away time without advantage, it increases our guilt, and discourages our hearts, insomuch that we are almost willing to meet no more, since our coming together is for the worse and not for the better. Many times, indeed, our spirits, instead of being cheered and strengthened by mutual love, are embittered by exasperating contentions. This is not keeping the fellowship of saints, but endangering and impairing it. In contrast with such unseemly disputings, when you meet with pious friends, improve the time in conversation suited to make you wiser and better. Spend not all your fleeting hours about news or worldly affairs, or in "questions that gender strife." Talk sometimes as Christians, and not always as earthlings, or as polemics. Many are apt enough to cast down the bone of contention; but do you rather present the marrow of religion, that you may edify one another. Sit not together as mutes, or as men of the world discoursing about matters of state, or trade, or agriculture, or the weather; but if there be ever a wise man among you, let him fetch some spark from heaven, and throw it in the

midst, that every one may bring his stick to the fire, and by the breath of mutual love, raise it to a flame that shall warm your hearts, and make them even burn within you, as did the hearts of the two disciples, when Christ met them on the way to Emmaus, and opened to them the Scriptures. And whatever increased knowledge of truth or direction in duty you may thus acquire, carefully treasure up for future use. Recollect, however, that your principal object should be, not to furnish your heads with arguments for all subjects and all companies, but to have your hearts made better, your graces invigorated, your lusts weakened, your lives reformed, and your consciences resolved. O what advantage may you not gain from Christian society, when directed to such an end! From serious conversation you derive this two-fold result; you do good to others, and receive good from others. The benefit which you impart is reflected back upon yourself. Scholars find that conversation rubs up their memories, revives their reading, gives them mastery over their ideas, and imprints afresh what was almost obliterated. A man of distinguished learning, after a long discourse with one greatly his inferior, returned him many thanks for the opportunity he had afforded him of recalling his past studies; and a celebrated Jewish doctor was wont to say, he had learned much from his

masters, more from his equals, but most of all from his scholars. Hence arose the proverb, "I have learned by teaching." Experience tells us that having to do with the doubts, temptations, desertions, and corruptions of others, instructs us how to deal with our own. Be not backward, therefore, in helping the weak, because thereby you serve both them and yourselves; by one act, as it were, feeding others, and digesting your own food.

Besides, this Christian communion, being an appointment of God, is followed by His blessing and gracious acceptance. The members of Christ's mystical body, "speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." What is lacking in one member is supplied by another, and thus, by mutual giving and receiving, the entire brotherhood is strengthened, consolidated, and advanced in knowledge and holiness. A live coal, laid to a dead one, kindles it; a ripe grape, placed beside a green one, ripens it. Company is of an assimilating nature,—and grace, like fire, will beget its like. When believers meet together for spiritual purposes, Christ meets with them; goes from

heart to heart; inquires into their wants; and, Joseph-like, fills their sacks with treasure. Where Christ keeps house, nothing is wanting; He that girded Himself to serve His disciples will wait to be gracious, and satisfy hungry souls. And while this fraternal intercourse of the pious is thus a source of incalculable good to those who maintain it, it is at the same time an offering highly pleasing to God. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Go forth, therefore, poor soul, "by the footsteps of the flock, and feed the kids beside the shepherds' tents." Mingle with the people of God when they assemble for social prayer and edification, and you will find your spiritual strength renewed. Maintain communion with them, also, in the more public ordinances of religion. These are expressly appointed for your instruction in righteousness, and the establishment of your Christian character. Every part of the service of God's house,—prayer, praise, the reading of Scripture, the word preached, the sacraments administered,—will help to fill your souls. You may get good by baptism and the Lord's Supper, faithfully used, and believingly improved; and, therefore, let every one who would

have a treasure of grace, rightly observe these holy ordinances. It is, nevertheless, important for you to remember, that though these ordinances are necessary, and the great means of spiritual life, yet not in that manner and respect in which food is to a natural life, because they contain in themselves no vital force or efficacy. They are not physical, but moral instruments of salvation. They were instituted by God as symbols of great and saving truths, and when received by us agreeably to His command, and in a right temper of mind, they become, through the blessing of His Spirit, powerful means of enlarging our conceptions of the grace of the Gospel, deepening our sense of obligation to Christ, and confirming our love and obedience to Him. Especially is this the case with the Lord's Supper. In that delightful ordinance, we commemorate the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which He bore the punishment of our sins, and wrought out our redemption. How suited is such a commemoration to incite gratitude, to enliven faith, to sustain us in our own sufferings, and to bind our hearts more closely to Him who loved us even unto death! Unite often, then, with the saints in showing forth the grace of your ascended Lord. Receive the emblems of His bitter sorrow with a believing apprehension of

their import; with penitence for your sins; with hearts glowing with love to Him and to His people; and you will find the exercise greatly adapted to strengthen your religious principles and feelings.

CHAPTER X.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED UP.

EVERY truth contained in Scripture is important to the growth and completeness of Christian character. As the filings of gold are precious; as the least star in the firmament has its appointed design and influence; so all divine truths have their peculiar preciousness and efficacy. Truth is a sacred deposit, which God has committed to His people, and which must on no account be undervalued or lost; for the whole world cannot give a price equivalent to the least truth. To this end was Christ born; to this end He shed His dearest blood—that He might bear witness to the truth, and purchase the publication of it. It is very dangerous to be careless even of minor truths, for there is nothing superfluous in the sacred Canon. Things comparatively little may be great in their sphere, season, and consequences; and we should beware how we break the golden chain of truths, and injure their beautiful connection and harmony.

But while we are thus studiously to gather, and firmly to retain, whatever the word of God teaches,

it is still specially incumbent on us to treasure up fundamental and seasonable truths; truths, on which we must venture our souls, and such as we may have peculiar occasion to use—truths suited to the age and circumstances in which we live. Hence an apostle exhorts believers to "be established in the present truth;" that is, as some interpret the expression, in the doctrine of the Gospel then newly revealed; or, as others understand it, in the belief and advocacy of such truths as are most opposed and contradicted. Every age of the world, and every state of society, have their present errors, by which false teachers seek to undermine the truth, and to seduce its professors; and, therefore, it behoves the Christian to be well stored with such truths as may serve to guard him against prevailing corruptions in principle or in practice.

There are three classes of divine truths, with which all Christians should strive to be well furnished, namely, doctrinal, experimental, and practical truths.

1. Doctrinal truths are to be carefully acquired, and faithfully maintained. "Hold fast the form of sound words." The word here used, in the original, signifies a model or platform,—a mould or frame of words or things, methodically disposed, as printers set and compose their characters

in a table. Thus gospel doctrine is the mould, and hearers are the metal which takes the form and impresssion of that into which it is cast. A Christian should have the whole body of divinity incorporated within him. It is not below the most able, intelligent, and judicious Christian to read, and even commit to memory, catechisms and brief digests of theology. I beseech you lay this good doctrinal foundation, and you will derive infinite advantage from it during the whole course of your lives. It will teach you to discourse distinctly, to hear profitably, and to read the Scriptures and good books with judgment, being able to try all things, and to refer every thing to its proper place and connection. You will find great benefit from thoroughly fixing in your minds, and classifying in their proper order, with suitable proof-texts for each, such prominent doctrines as the following: The Holy Scriptures are of divine authority, and the sole, complete, and supreme rule of faith and practice. God is an infinite, simple, and immutable Spirit. In the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct Persons, which are yet one in nature, in essence, and in every divine perfection. All things depend upon God's eternal decrees. Man was created perfect in holiness and happiness; but, through the apostacy of Adam, all his posterity have become in-

volved in pollution and ruin. Christ, the God-man, is the only Mediator between God and man,—who, by His obedience, sufferings, and death, hath satisfied divine justice, and justified sinners. They, and they only, who sincerely repent and believe, are justified and accepted. Christ has established a visible church in the world, of which He is the supreme and only Head, and whose members are to consist of such as credibly profess faith in His name, and observe the ordinances which He has instituted. At the end of time, there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and a day of public and final judgment, in which the righteous shall be received into life eternal, and the wicked condemned to everlasting punishment. Cardinal doctrines like these, firmly imprinted in the memory, and clearly comprehended, will greatly assist your advancement in Christian knowledge and holiness. They will form a centre around which other truths will gather, until you become, at length, familiar with the whole system of revealed truth, and well instructed in whatever God requires you to believe or do. Thus will you be provided with a constant defence against error in all its forms, with a sure guide in every question of duty, and with unfailing motives to its performance.

2. Another class of truths, which you should

carefully ponder and lay up, consists of experimental truths; that is, of such as are vital and vivifying, and whose transforming power is to be experienced and felt in the heart. These comprise the very essence and substance of inward religion. They reach and pervade the inmost spirit, bow the will, engage the affections, awaken the conscience, and influence the entire character and life. And they are as delightful and refreshing, as they are controlling. They afford the sweetest solace to a sound believer, and open before him the most ravishing subjects of contemplation. In their hidden and mysterious workings on the soul, they are like that "new song" which "no man could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth;" or like that "new name which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Such truths are better felt than spoken, sooner experienced than expressed, like those unutterable words which Paul heard in Paradise. They are, in fact, such truths as are hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes. To know aright "the truth as it is in Jesus," is to feel its quickening and renovating power on the heart. Without this experience, knowledge is but a cold and worthless speculation. The choicest truths of the Gospel cannot be discerned by the understanding, until it is illumined

by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, shining in upon the affections. The theology of the Bible is not speculative, but effective and influential.

It may not be without use to give you here a short summary of the truths belonging to this class, which you are especially to store up in your minds; and though such a summary must necessarily be incomplete, it may yet serve to direct your inquiries, and guide you to results more full and satisfactory. The principal points which I would mention are these; That by nature we are averse to all good, and prone to all evil. That we have no power of our own to obtain saving good, but are entirely dependent for its bestowment on the sovereign mercy of God. That regeneration is a thorough change of the whole man, in heart and life, effected by the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit. That faith and repentance are the gifts of God's free grace. That a sinner is justified only by Christ's merits imputed, not by works. That conformity to God is an inseparable attendant of communion with God. That every child of God has the Spirit of adoption, to assist him in prayer. That the best saints in this life are sanctified but in part. That a Christian's truest and noblest life is a life of faith. That sincere saints may be assured of the truth of grace within them, and of their consequent title to

glory. That a justified person cannot totally and finally fall away, but will be kept by the power of God unto salvation. These and other kindred truths, cordially believed, and deeply graven on the heart, will greatly increase your experience of the vital power of Christianity. They will deepen the work of grace in your souls; promote your sanctification; strengthen your faith and hope; enlarge your comforts; and render you more and more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

3. One more class of truths, which should be diligently laid up, consists of such as relate mainly to practice. Fundamental truths of practical concernment are, in a manner, the soul of religion. Christianity is not a mere creed; it is a life, animating first the heart, and flowing thence into the conduct. Socrates is accounted the wisest of the heathen sages, because he applied his studies and teachings to the department of morals—to the regulation of human actions. And the great design of the Gospel is not to make men more learned, but to make them better; not merely to instruct, but to correct and purify them. Conscientious practice is, in fact, both the end of Christian knowledge, and the means to its farther attainment. If we faithfully perform what we know of God's will, more ample discoveries of it will be

made to us. If we give up ourselves to the truth, the truth will make us free. Truths of a practical import tend to deliver the soul from the bondage of sin, to bring it into the liberty of the sons of God, and to prepare us to regard His service as perfect freedom. Doctrinal truths have to do with our faith; experimental, with our hearts; practical, with our lives. The first are to be believed, the second to be experienced, the third to be obeyed. With these last, in all their various forms of application, the Scriptures are filled. They teach us that all creatures were made for the glory of God, and are sacredly bound to promote it; and that, although since the fall the divine law is no longer the ground of our justification, it is still the standard of our obedience. They teach us that true faith embraces Christ wholly, in His commands as well as in His grace, in the strictness of His precepts as well as in the largeness of His mercy; that none can expect pardon without a sincere, evangelical repentance, and amendment of life; that though man's best duties are imperfect, and merit no reward at God's hands, yet good works are the necessary fruits and evidences of a living faith; and that those only are good works which proceed from a right source, are governed by a right rule, and directed to a right end. And they further teach us that all who are

redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, are under the most solemn obligation, not only to exemplify His Gospel in their spirit and conduct, but to consecrate their time, talents, and property unreservedly to the work of extending His cause, and publishing His salvation throughout the world.

The brief and imperfect enumeration, which has now been given, may serve as a specimen of the several kinds of truth which you should sedulously labor to acquire. These you are to collect and seal up as your choicest treasure; and you will find that such a treasure will furnish your minds with saving knowledge; fortify your hearts against opposition and error; satisfy your spirits amidst doubts and difficulties; teach you to profit by every dispensation of God's providence; and prepare you for fiery trials, and the fiercest assaults of persecution. You cannot stand for truths which you do not know, and you will not stand for those which you do not adopt, and highly value. You are to hold fast what you have received; and, therefore, you should receive what you may retain, and live up to, and live upon, in an evil day. As a minister, so a private member of the church must hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught. He must maintain truth with all his might, struggle and contend for it, and, if need be,

die in its defence. Truth and our souls must be married, and never divorced. There are truths on which we may venture our souls, and for which, should the necessity arise, we must venture our lives It has been atheistically said by some, that the martyrs in Queen Mary's days died in a pet, and were too prodigal of their blood; and that God requires no man to be cruel to himself for His sake. But true believers have otherwise learned Christ than to deny Him or His truth before men; for they would not be denied by Him on another day. They have so learned to love Him as to lay down their lives for Him, if He call them to it; and thus, by being overcome, they overcome, as their Master did before them. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." It is the duty of every Christian to lay up in the cabinet of his heart such truths as he may live and die by, and to adhere closely and constantly to them. We must do by truth as Cæsar did by his books, when, having to swim through a river to escape the fury of his enemies, he carried his books above the water with his hand, but lost his robe. Thus, should we be called to swim through a sea of trouble in following the Lamb, we must keep the Lord's deposit, even though we lose our garments of earthly enjoy-

ment; and must sooner part with life itself than with the sacred and saving truths contained in the Book of God. "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life." Hence, many have been willing to be burnt themselves rather than give up their Bibles to be burnt; and have chosen to be racked for the truth, sooner than suffer themselves to be rent from the truth. It is our high and imperative duty at once to hold fast the word of life, and to hold it forth; to be witnesses to it actively, and witnesses for it passively; and if we maintain it, it will maintain us. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." The word of Christ's patience may be taken for such truth as produces, when received, a quiet, composed, and submissive frame of spirit; or for that which demands the exercise of patience, inasmuch as it may call its professors to endure great hardships in its support, and even to lay down their lives for it. A Christian must never flinch, but, in the strength of God, encounter the greatest perils and sufferings for approved, experienced, and vital truths. "I know," says Bishop Hall, "there is a difference in truths, and in the value which we are to set upon them, as in coins, whereof one piece is a farthing, and another no less than a pound." Let this, however, be to you a compre-

hensive and inviolable rule—despise not the smallest truth—prove all things by the authority of Scripture—lay up and hold fast whatever is consonant to it; yet, at the same time, place the greatest stress on those truths which are fundamental; and having once made them your own, be not driven to surrender them by a world in arms.

CHAPTER XI.

CULTIVATION OF CHRISTIAN GRACES.

ANOTHER class of precious commodities, which a Christian should treasure up, is, divine graces. Every grace is of vast worth, and of excellent use. Even the least degree of sincere grace is of more value than a mine of gold, or a prince's crown and kingdom. It is said of the grace of faith, that the trial of it—that is, faith tried in the furnace of affliction,—is much more precious than gold that perisheth. No finite mind can set a right and perfect estimate on a grain of true grace, which is no other than the offspring of Heaven, the purchase of Christ's blood, and the blessed fruit of His Spirit. It is part of the Divine nature, the image of God, the seed of immortality. Grace is the defence and the ornament of the soul; the brightest glory and accomplishment of a Christian. Let worldlings toil to gather great estates, filling their houses with goods, their barns with grain, and their bags with gold; but let the pious soul seek to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, the graces of the Spirit.

There are four kinds of graces, which I would earnestly advise all Christians in a special manner to cultivate and treasure up in their hearts. These are directing, subjecting, profiting, and persevering graces.

1. The believer is to lay up, with diligence, directing graces. By these, I mean an abundance of knowledge, wisdom, prudence, and judgment, that he may have light and discernment in the things of God. Days are coming, when Christians may need the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove. The spiritual traveller is often puzzled, in his journey, with various paths, and intricate windings. Of how much worth, in such circumstances, is a spirit of understanding, whereby we may choose the good, and refuse the evil, and keep the straight road to heaven! Hence the apostle prays for the Philippians, "that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that they might approve things that are excellent." The means to keep us from erring about things indifferent, is to have a solid apprehension concerning those which are excellent, and which tend to sincerity and uprightness of life; and, therefore, the apostle adds, "that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ." A spirit of discernment is necessary to exact walking. An enlightened con-

science helps the soul to be without offence. No man can walk circumspectly, but "he that hath his eyes in his head." He that walks in darkness with a blind eye knows not whither he goeth. The eye of the mind is the light and guide of the will and affections; and if that be blind, those blind faculties fall into the ditch of error, apostacy, and misery. The Christian's eyes must be full of light. We cannot have too much knowledge, if it be sanctified. In one act of religion, a Christian has to look many ways,—inward, at his principle,—upward, to the pleasing of God,—forward, at the reward,—downward, at the profit of men. There are many eyes upon us, and our eyes must be upon many. Some long to see our well-doing, others watch for our halting. We need wisdom to carry ourselves usefully towards the good, and wisely towards those that are without. There is great necessity for true and solid knowledge, to enable us to discern our own duty, and yet exercise charity; to mind our own business, and keep within our place and station, and yet abound in good offices to saints and sinners. We shall find some difficulty in acting always, so as not to give offence carelessly, or to take offence causelessly. We should learn to see with our own eyes, and not be led by others, however wise, or learned, or godly. O what a blessed thing is it to be wise to that

which is good, and simple concerning evil! With how much more ease may a Christian go through his arduous course with than without solid knowledge! "Wisdom is profitable to direct." It "is better than weapons of war." It "excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness." Practical wisdom is infinitely more important than that which is merely speculative; for "the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." This treasure of directing graces is practical. It helps the tongue to answer discreetly, the feet to walk properly, the hands to work efficiently, and to spend no time or pains in ill-judged and irrelevant efforts. It also has to do with a man's own self; and does not range abroad, while it forgets home. The greatest politician is a very fool when he cannot order his own affairs with discretion. He that is not wise for himself is not wise at all. Paul prays for the saints at Colosse, "that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." For what end? That they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." That is the only valuable knowledge which leads to holy practice. The profit of the soul is the end of spiritual understanding. They who aim not at this end, and whose studies do not advance them

towards it, may have the repute of learned men, but will never pass for judicious Christians.

Be solicitous, then, to lay up those graces that may direct you. There is a vast difference between a Christian of a solid and one of a weak judgment, though both may be equally sincere. The one knows duty and lawful liberty; the conscience of the other is wofully perplexed with nice and needless scruples, which render him a burden to himself, a hindrance to others, and expose him to a world of temptations. An unsettled soul, that is yet well-meaning, but ignorant, forms a theatre on which Satan and seducers act dreadful tragedies. It is such unstable ones that wrest and pervert the Scriptures; that are constant only in inconstancy; "and are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." They receive a new impression from every sermon or company, and are as quick to abandon as they are prompt to embrace a new notion; so that you cannot tell where to find them. But a sober, solid, well-taught Christian has taken his stand, and you may know where to find him, and he knows where to find his own principles. He moves always upon the firm ground of Scripture truth. By the light of revelation, he can ordinarily find his way through the dark mists of error, and by the hand of the Spirit he is conducted along the often obscure and nar-

row passages of duty, to rest and satisfaction. Hence, it is said, that "he that is spiritual judgeth all things." By this stock of directing graces, he is qualified to decide in doubtful cases, and is assisted to behave himself wisely in a perfect way.

2. Treasure up subjecting graces, that may help you to bear God's will, and freely to submit to His disposal. Of this class are patience, humility, self-denial, weanedness from the world, heavenly-mindedness, and that rare jewel, Christian contentment in all conditions. O what a happy soul is that to which nothing can come amiss, and which is furnished for every storm! Paul was a brave scholar in this suffering school, for he had "learned, in whatever state he was, therewith to be content." It is a hard and long task; but what cannot grace undertake and overcome, through the help of assisting grace? The treasured Christian may say, with David, "My foot standeth in an even place." Come what may, he will light upon his feet, and stand upright, and not wrench his foot by turning aside into crooked ways. As he lies square to every command of God, so he does righteousness at all times. It is the design of wicked men to push away the feet of the godly from their standing in holy paths and outward comforts; and, therefore, we must "make strait

paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." In other words, we must get a principle of health and rectitude, in opposition to that wayward and wandering disposition of heart, which is natural to all men, that we may not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left, but hasten in a straight course to the goal of glory. Grace strengthens the nerves of the soul, and helps against halting. The feet of the saints are shod with courage and holy resolution, that they may walk steadily in slippery places. "The whole armor of God," even the precious stock of Christian graces, will fortify the believer against the sharpest encounters. Above all, as a preparative for suffering, there is nothing which so bows the spirit to bear burdens, so subjects it to the Lord's pleasure, so helps it to wait His time, and so secures it from danger, as the heart-quieting grace of faith. This is the way to strength and safety. A man of strong faith is fit for any condition, and will live by his faith when all things fail. Nothing can daunt, depress, or overpower him. "He is," as Ambrose strikingly remarks, "invincible in labors, strong for dangers, rigid against pleasures, hardened against the alluring baits of the world." O the excellence and necessity of faith, courage, and a Christian magnanimity! The believer, who is thus endowed, moves in a higher orbit than

ordinary Christians, and leads the van of the sacramental host. Faith sets the soul as on an impregnable rock in the midst of the sea, around which the waves of men's malicious threats and hot revenge break in vain; so that it can say, with David, "In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." Amongst other subjecting graces, be sure to lay up a good treasure of that incomparable grace of meekness, which captivates the understanding to the obedience of faith, moderates the will to a due submission to the Lord's disposal, and silences the lips against all murmuring expostulations. This precious grace takes well all that God doth, and rages not against the instruments. It yields active or passive obedience to superiors with cheerfulness; and though it dare not yield up its judgment to the guidance of any mortal man or church on earth, yet it meekly lies under the censures and punishments of men, "committing all to Him that judgeth righteously." These, and such like suffering graces and dispositions, must Christians store up, that they may suffer according to the will of God, in the sharpest conflicts which they may meet on earth. The truth is, you little know what lies between you and the grave. You have not yet resisted unto blood, but you may. You little know what religion may cost you. You may

have to go through a long "vale of the shadow of death," to death, and "fight with beasts at Ephesus," and then mount up in a fiery chariot to heaven. Sit down, then, and reckon the charges of such a warfare, and whether you have armor of proof to carry you through a host of dangers and difficulties. Stock yourselves for a storm; frame your backs for a burden; melt your wills into God's will, if you desire to hold out against fainting and despair, and would hear that sweet and blessed encomium from the lips of Christ, "Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

3. Endeavor to treasure up profiting graces; such as will help you both in doing and receiving good. For the first, lay up those graces which will render you serviceable in your places. "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another;" such as brotherly love, kindness, charity, meekness, forbearance, gentleness, condescension, mutual sympathy, compassion to the souls of men, and zeal for the glory of God; a benevolent spirit and a heart to lament the sins and sufferings of the church. It is a blessed thing to be of public

use. To be diffusive and communicative, adds lustre to what is truly good. Some Christians have those useful gifts and graces, which others, though truly good, may want. The more good you have, the more good you may do. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." God lays in, that we may lay out, and we are to lay up great treasures on purpose that we may do the more good. It was an excellent saying of Luther, that "all things are made free by faith, and all things are made serviceable by love." It is the property and pleasure of a good soul to be doing good. Living springs send forth streams of water spontaneously; while dead pits must have all that they afford drawn out with ropes and buckets. The fuller a gracious soul is, the more free will be the communication. There is as much comfort in doing, as in receiving good. You must seek to be fitted for both. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;" that you may be disposed to glorify God, edify others, and serve your generation, according to the will of God, and at last give a good account of your talents and stewardship. Blessed is the man who has his quiver full of these valuable shafts, and his boxes full of gracious cordials, so that he may both

wound sinners by admonition, and heal them with the sweet words of consolation.

You need also to treasure up such graces as will help you to get good to your own souls by all God's dealings with you. Mix trials as well as the word with faith. Receive all afflictions with meekness, and bring forth fruit with patience. All that God does is for our profit. Even the tokens of His anger are designed to promote our advantage; and the sharpest corrections of His hand are administered with a view to our instruction. That we may be made partakers of His holiness, is the end at which He aims in all His dispensations. All things would work together for our good, if we had a receptive principle; for to him that hath a treasure shall more be given, according to the proportion of grace received and improved. Ordinances would do us more good if we had grace to get good by them. A heart, sanctified and stored with improving graces, is like tinder, which soon takes fire, and is apt to keep it, till it be forced out. Chemists tell us, that transmutation is easy in such elements as agree in their primary qualities. Water is more easily turned into air than into fire. So, a holy and spiritual heart will be easily wrought on by holy and spiritual ordinances; for here is an agreement in qualities. Gracious qualities make the soul both

receptive and retentive of heavenly impressions. Grow in grace every day, and then you will get good by all God's dealings.

There are several graces which dispose the soul to spiritual proficiency; such as sensibility of conscience, tenderness and brokenness of heart, which prepare the mind to receive divine culture, and mellow it for "the seed of the kingdom." A similar effect is produced by a clear perception of spiritual wants, a conscious feeling of the guilt and burden of sin, earnest breathing after God, with intense and longing desires for the assurance of His favor. These capacitate the soul for both sanctifying and satisfying incomes. Strength of grace is usually attended by sweet manifestations of the Divine presence and blessing. "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." Strong and well furnished Christians have many precious epistles from heaven.

4. Treasure up persevering graces. Store your hearts with such elements of steadfastness, constancy, and progress, as may carry you through the world, and through death, and land you safe on the shore of eternity. Of this kind are sincerity, humility, faith, hope, love, the fear of God, delight in Him, resignation to Him, unwavering decision for Him, contempt of the world, and

desire of heaven. If you have these, you shall never fail. Unsound professors may and will fall away; but such as are thus rooted shall grow up as high as heaven. Hypocrites may seem to climb up many steps towards heaven, and yet come short of it. But he, who ascends by a ladder that has sincerity at the bottom, and perseverance at the top, shall not miss of glory. O see to the uprightness of your hearts, and the genuineness of your graces! Be not mistaken in regard to your state. Build high, by laying the foundation low. If the root of the matter be in you, it shall not be eradicated; saving grace will end in eternal blessedness. The girdle of truth, "the breast-plate of righteousness," "the shield of faith," the shoes of heroic resolution, "the helmet of hope," the sword of the Spirit, and constant, fervent prayer, will help the struggling believer to a glorious victory; and God himself will, at the last, place on his head an imperishable crown. If you possess and cultivate these graces, you will hold on, and hold out. If "your love abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," you will "be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Is it not your dearest hope to arrive safely in heaven? Then lay for yourselves a deep and stable foundation, in evangelical faith and repentance, and in all the princi-

ples of vital godliness, and the superstructure shall surely be crowned with eternal life. Press forward, and aim ever at perfection. Heap up graces, of such kind, and in such number and measure, that "so an entrance may be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The great direction, prescribed in the whole of the passage of which this citation forms the close, is, that the believer should successively add one degree and sort of grace to another. The original word, which is translated, "add," contains an allusion to the dances of virgins in the Grecian Chorus, who linked themselves hand in hand, and went through their part in a connected order. And it is observable, that in the clause which has been quoted, the same word is used to express the adding or ministering to the advanced Christian an entrance into the happiness of heaven; thus denoting the nearness and propinquity between the highest degrees of grace, and the state of glory. The chain of divine graces reaches from the first uniting grace of faith, to the crowning and God-enjoying grace of perfect love; and these virgin-graces, joined hand in hand in a believing soul, lead it higher and higher, till they bring it into the presence of the Prince—into the splendors of the Bridegroom's chamber. O how sweetly

will you move onward to heaven, led by these concatenated graces; the Lord himself still holding the end of the golden chain, and drawing your souls every day nearer to glory! We "are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." The Lord, by preserving and strengthening the grace of faith, will uphold us in all our conflicts, and conduct us in triumph to His everlasting kingdom. By His assistance, as the efficient cause, and in the exercise and increase of all graces, especially faith, as the means, we shall persevere unto the end. Thus should Christians treasure up sustaining graces, that they may not faint by the way; that their last may be more than their first; and that the fabric of their piety may be raised as high as heaven. Let this, however, be firmly fixed in your mind, that Christ, and Christ only, must be your foundation, and that you can build on Him aright only by deep self-abasement and renunciation of sin. You will never have a perfection of degrees, unless you have a perfection of parts in integrity of heart; nor will you ever reach final glory, unless Christ, by His merits and by His Spirit, draw you up with Him in His own ascension. Look well, then, to your interest in His atoning blood, and, having done this, then grow in grace till grace expand into the holiness and bliss of heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

EXPERIENCES TO BE TREASURED UP.

A FURTHER class of precious and useful things which the believer should lay up, is composed of those various experiences which meet him in all the passages of his life. By collecting and preserving these, he may secure much benefit; for to do so, is a plain duty, a mark of wisdom, and a means of more. Thus the Psalmist, after a glowing record of the varied operations of Divine Providence, says, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." As if he had said, They, that set themselves to consider the Lord's works in the world, have wise and observant spirits, and shall grow still wiser, and see more of God in His dispensations than other men. God opens His secret cabinet to those who devoutly study the developments of His moral government. But, on the other hand, he views, with severe displeasure, those who are blind to His dealings, and threatens them with the heaviest punishment. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the

operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up." Rightly to ponder the agency of God in all earthly affairs, is a work too high for the sottish minds of irreligious men. It is only the true Christian that suitably recognizes this agency, and derives from it the lessons which it is intended to teach. "The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked;" that is, he considers what becomes of it, how the Lord deals with wicked men and with their houses; and observes, in all the vicissitudes of human things, the dispensations of God towards the good and the evil, in mercy and in judgment. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

It is my purpose, however, to notice in this connection, the personal experiences of the believer in matters relating to himself; and to view them as having reference to four particulars; the vanity of the world, the treachery of his own heart, the bitterness of sin, and heavenly discoveries. From each of these departments, I would urge every child of God to draw salutary instruction for his future guidance.

1. Lay up experiences of the world's vanity.

Solomon was engaged, during his whole life, in making such a collection; and, in his old age, he recorded it in the Book of Ecclesiastes, as a lesson to all after generations. He possessed unrivalled faculties and opportunities for prosecuting such an experiment. He knew better than any man what the world can do for its most favored votaries. But, after having tasted its most intoxicating delights, he pronounces the sad and disheartening result. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And the whole book, in which he thus describes his experience, is an induction of facts and arguments to prove this assertion. "What," then, "can the man do that cometh after the king?" Alas, if you make the like investigation, you will be forced to come to the same conclusion. You cannot search deeper than he did into the nature of earthly good, nor drink fuller draughts from the fountains of worldly pleasure; yet he found but emptiness and vexation in all the enjoyments which sense can offer. And have not you found the same? Read the wise man's last and soundest lectures on the vanity of every pursuit that terminates here; recall your past history as you read, and let dear bought experience give its comment; and then lay up both text and comment in your hearts. Say, didst thou ever trust the world but it deceived thee? Has it not failed thee at such a time? and

disappointed thee in such a case? O how didst thou bless thyself in such an expectation? but, alas, thou didst grasp the sand or smoke. Hast thou not found riches uncertain, friends inconstant, relations vanishing? Have you not seen the world passing away, and its pleasures, profits, and honors, like a swift gliding river, hastening onward to the dark ocean of forgetfulness? However men may be bewitched with the world's bravery, the Spirit of God judges of it as a mere phantasm—a pageant show, that glitters with a hollow and deceitful splendor. What solid content have you ever found in it? When you have sought to the creature for happiness, has it not answered, "It is not in me?" Or have you not learned that all created joys are, at best, but as a dream of the night, when the hungry and thirsty think they eat and drink, but wake and still are faint? Have you not found this true in your own sad experience? If so, then treasure up these results; regard them as settled facts; and learn from them to trust the world no more. O wouldst thou endanger thy soul again? Wilt thou lean again upon this broken reed, that will run into thy hand and heart, and pierce thee with many sorrows? Wilt thou, by striving to be rich, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and

perdition?" The truth is, there is nothing in this world which can answer our desires and hopes. No earthly pursuit or attainment is capable of affording us what we expect from it. We find the world but a lie. Its brightest glories are a mocking vision; its fairest promises turn into disappointments that strike and wound us; and thus what we trusted to as our leaning-staff becomes a knocking cudgel. Well, then, since you have found it so, look upon it as such, and carefully preserve the experience.

2. Lay up experiences of the treachery of your own heart. The heart is a mournful book; but you must peruse and re-peruse it, if you would not live and die in fatal ignorance. Study, then, the multifarious windings, and artifices, and concealments of thy depraved heart. Consider and remember well all its ways of guile and guilt which have cost thee so dear. In thus reviewing thy inward history, thou wilt find, that in such a duty thy heart gave thee the slip—in such a temptation thy heart led away thy feet, or hands, or tongue, and caused thy flesh to sin—in such an enjoyment thy perfidious heart stole away—in such a moment of worldly success thy groveling heart prostrated itself in bestial idolatry at the altar of Mammon—in such an affliction thy murmuring heart rose up against God, and thy tumultuous, quarrelsome

spirit made thee speak unadvisedly with thy lips. And wilt thou trust thy deceitful heart again? Who but a fool will venture his whole estate with a known thief? What wise man will be imposed on by a detected juggler? "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." And will not you be the veriest fool that breathes, if after so many cheating tricks, you still confide in this unmitigated traitor? Ah, reader, I appeal to thine own experience. How many a woful instance hast thou had of the heart's deceitfulness! It is prone to deceive, and equally prone to be deceived, and the latter is the more dangerous quality. The heart, since the fall, is naturally of a crafty, subtle, and fickle temper, and is made still worse and worse, by the deceitfulness of sin, which is woven and twisted, as it were, into its very frame and texture. These two cheats conspire to undo the soul. And were not God a better friend to us than we are to ourselves, our salvation would be impossible. Every man is a Satan to himself; and the sincere Christian will pray, most of all, to be delivered from that evil one, himself. He is far more afraid of the folly bound up in his own heart, than of all the outward assaults of the world, and the machinations of hell. And, indeed, the reason that any man indulges self-confidence, is because he is ignorant of the treacherous workings of his own heart,

or, having felt them, neglects the experience. As a desperate bankrupt shrinks from inspecting his accounts, lest the evidences of his ruin should glare too frightfully upon him; so a poor deceived sinner dares not look into his heart, from a vague, but uneasy consciousness that he will not find things there exactly as he wishes; and thus he seeks to cover it over, and to conceal even from himself a sight so destructive to his peace. The real child of God, however, cannot but see what others overlook, or strive to hide; and willingly does he see it, and as sadly does he lament it, and as watchfully labor to subdue and extirpate it. And it deserves to be noted, that though the deceptions of the heart are a source of great evil and danger, yet to observe and remember them is of singular benefit to a serious mind, and one of its strongest safeguards against their power. May God enable us all so to know and fear our own hearts, that we shall henceforth trust them less, and Him more.

3. Lay up experiences of the bitterness of sin. Consider what have been the insinuating ways of sin and Satan to entangle you, and what the sad effects which followed. Consider what tears, and groans, and painful strugglings it has cost you to extricate your captive souls, and regain freedom and peace. O the intricate windings of that crook-

ed serpent! What strange and subtle devices has he used to entrap you in his snares, or overtake you with his furious assaults! How often has he presented the bait, and hid the hook! Has he not set before your credulous souls the pleasure or profit of a base lust? Has he not extenuated sin at first to induce you to commit it, and afterwards aggravated it to drive you to despair? Sin cheats us with the prospect of golden mountains, and lures us on in pursuit of the delusive vision, till it leaves us in the mire at last. Though its beginning may seem delightful, its end is always bitter. Has not such been your experience? Ask your own hearts, what fruit you had in those things whereof you are now ashamed? The awakened conscience will answer, that their only fruit is death—deadly pain now, or eternal death hereafter—the death-like throes of repentance in this world, or the death-dealing inflictions of vengeance in the world to come. Your wild oats, sown with delight in youth, sprung up, in your riper years, into bitter hemlock and wormwood. Though wickedness was sweet on your lips, it turned to the gall of asps within—a biting, scathing poison, filling your very soul with agony. O the dreadful stings and pangs that sin leaves behind it! With what fears and horrors, with what wearing griefs and crushing anxieties, does it fill the penitent

soul! What broken bones and affrighting cares must the prodigal endure, before he is received into his Father's sweet embraces! How long is the humble suitor compelled to lie at the gates of mercy, before he can obtain admission, or see the King's face, or taste the joy of His salvation! And this arises not from any unwillingness on the part of God to bestow forgiveness, or from any delight which He feels in the anguish of a sinner; but from His desire suitably to impress the heart with the evil of sin, to stir it up to more earnest longings for His grace, to lead it to prize Christ and pardon more, and to teach it to hate and to avoid transgression for the future. He, therefore, often keeps the soul long in suspense, even when His bowels yearn over it, as Joseph's did over his brethren. He deals with the soul, as He dealt with Miriam in the cure of her leprosy. When Moses besought Him to pardon her sin, and to heal her, although He listened to the prayer, yet, in order to affect her mind with a just sense of the offence which she had committed, He required her to wait seven days, and to be shut out, during the interval, from the congregation. Thus God would have us know the worth of his favor, by the want of it for a season. Surely, if you would lay such sad experience in store, it would prove a powerful antidote against future temptation. O what ab-

horrence of sin did the soul feel in the hour of its deep humiliation, and what earnest resolves did it form to sin no more! If, while David was bathing himself in briny tears, he had been asked, What sayest thou now to murder? How dost thou like thy fleshly lusts? Wilt thou buy repentance at so dear a rate, and fall again into uncleanness? Would he not have answered, "O no! God forbid that I should sin again: I will be racked, or torn in pieces, rather than dishonor my God, grieve His Spirit, and fill my poor soul with such tormenting troubles?" When he was roaring by reason of the disquietness of his spirit, when there "was no rest in his bones because of his sin," he had far other thoughts of his sin than when he was adventuring upon it. There is scarcely any man so brutish as not to abstain from that which experience tells him has done him great harm. Every man of the least prudence will forbear such food and drink as he knows will infallibly bring upon him excruciating pain. So the Christian, who has learned by experience the bitterness of sin, and how dear it has cost him, will be careful not to commit it again. Thus will he reason, "I remember into what a sad condition sin brought me. It behoves me to sin no more lest a worse thing come upon me. Sin broke my bones; but now, if I sin again, I

fear it will break my neck. Sin filled my soul with heart-shaking fears; but I may expect it will now fill me with heart-desolating despair. It brought a hell into my conscience before; but I fear it will now cast my soul into hell." Lay up and thoughtfully ponder such sad experience, and I may then almost say, Sin if you dare.

4. Treasure up the divine discoveries, of which your souls have had sweet and satisfying experience. If you are Christians, such have doubtless been vouchsafed to you; and they were bestowed, not merely to be enjoyed, but to be remembered, contemplated, and improved. Of this class of experiences there are two kinds which I would recommend you to preserve; special providences, and spiritual influences.

You should lay up experiences of the particular manifestations of Divine Providence towards you. The wisdom of God has so disposed affairs with respect to His people, that one part of our life may help us in another; the van of our days contributing to bring up the rear. From the recollection of past deliverances, the soul may thus argue: "The Lord helped me in such a strait, directed in such a doubt, prevented such a fear, broke such a snare; He is the same God still, and will, therefore, help for the future." At every fresh interposition of Divine goodness, set up an

Ebenezer, so that from the portion of your pilgrimage which has been accomplished, you may derive memorials and encouragements for that which is to come. In each hour of perplexity and difficulty, sustain yourselves by the conclusive and scriptural argument, "The Lord has delivered; He does deliver; and, therefore, He will deliver." Write down signal providences, or lock them up in the safe depository of a sanctified memory, and produce them when you are in extremity, and have your back to the wall. Sweet experiences of former displays of God's care and protection, are not the least part of the Christian's treasure. I would not, indeed, have you dote upon them, or imagine that God can go no further than He has gone—a supposition which can only serve to daunt you in new and greater troubles. Nevertheless, be careful not to despise or slight these proofs of His kindness, but lay them up and plead them with Him, whenever your sky shall be again darkened, and the storm of calamity threaten to renew its violence. One part of the seventy-fourth Psalm contains a sad complaint of God's anger, and the afflictions of the Church; while the other glows with a cheering rehearsal of former exhibitions of the power and mercy of Jehovah. Thus the assistance vouchsafed in the past, sheds hope and confidence over the darkness of the future.

You must also treasure up the spiritual enlargements and comforts, which have gladdened your religious course. Call them to mind; review them with humility and gratitude; and in the season of desponding gloom thus draw from them encouragement and consolation. "In such an ordinance I met with God, and beheld His reconciled face. In such a duty my graces were quickened, exercised, increased. In such a season of secret prayer, my heart was warmed, melted, satisfied. In such a company, in such a society, in such a time of public worship, my whole soul was enlarged, filled, and sweetly transported beyond myself. O what a blessed day or night was that to me, when I experienced the manifestations of God's favor, enjoyed the smiles of His love, and felt the witness of His Spirit, sealing my forgiveness and acceptance. Well do I remember it; and my heart dances within me at the recollection. Those hours of blissful fellowship with God come over my spirit still, like gleams of Paradise. Such moments are not always to be expected. These heavenly dainties are not the Christian's ordinary fare. A pining time may come. I will, therefore, highly prize and carefully store up such foretastes of divine joy against the hour of need. God forbid that I should lose this token for good, this broken ring, this pledge from heaven. This may

stand me in stead, in a dark and gloomy day, when the Lord may frown upon me as an enemy, and seem to put me from Him, as though He would forsake me. Then, with Job, will I say unto Him, 'Thou knowest that I am not wicked.' Lord, dost Thou deal so with wicked men, or reveal Thyself thus to men who know Thee not? Art Thou wont to stir up in the careless world such penitent bemoanings, such ardent breathings, and such vehement pantings after Thyself? And hast Thou ever given to unregenerate souls such familiar discoveries of Thy grace, as my heart hath many a time received? Are these Thy ways with unsanctified men? Wilt Thou hold communion with those who were never united to Thee? Does not such communion presuppose a union? Either my experience is false and counterfeit, or I am Thine; for whom Thou lovest once, Thou lovest to the end. Though I am fickle and inconstant, Thou art the same, changeless in Thy love, as in Thy nature. I dare not say that all my sweet experiences were mere fictions, shadows, dreams. No. I humbly hope they were genuine evidences of Thy special love, arising from Thy word, and built upon it; yea, they carried their evidence along with them, and left such impressions on my soul as can never be forgotten or effaced. I can appeal to Thyself, O Lord, if

tokens have not come from Thee to me, such as Thou only couldst give, and none but a renewed heart could receive. And since Thou canst not deny Thy name, engraven on my heart, and sweetly sealed to me, I commit the matter wholly to Thee. Though now Thou seemest to carry strangely towards me, as if Thou hadst quite cast me off; yet Thou art my God still, my loving Father, my only Friend. I cannot part from Thee—I will not let Thee go. There was once love between us; and though now, in wisdom and faithfulness, Thou appearest to smother and restrain Thy love; yet I know, by the workings which I feel in my own breast towards Thee, that Thou hast the same heart which Thou wast wont to have. And, therefore, Lord, I hang upon Thee, and plead with David, 'Where are Thy former loving kindnesses which Thou swarest unto me?'"

Thus lay up your sweet experiences, and thus draw them forth in the black night of despondency and spiritual desertion. O when God deals graciously with you, neglect not the testimonies of His love, but garner them in the most sacred recesses of your heart, as mementoes from your Husband, Christ, to be your solace and joy during the dark and lonely hours in which you mourn His absence!

CHAPTER XIII.

COMFORTS TO BE LAID UP AS A TREASURE.

The last description of treasure, with which a believer should store his heart, consists of the sweet and satisfying comforts of the Spirit. It is true that these are the immediate and sovereign effects of the sanctifying and sealing energy of Divine grace; yet, ordinarily, they are dropped from heaven into the believing soul, through the channel of duty and holy endeavor. The nearer we approach to the sun, the more light and heat we receive. Now the exercises of religion are the approximations of a soul to the Sun of Righteousness; and, therefore, it is good for us to draw nigh to God, that we may anchor and centre our souls upon Him, in whom only they can find rest. This present reward we may have from keeping His commandments. Grace and peace, holiness and comfort, usually go hand in hand. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Every gracious act has some degree of comfort annexed to

it. Peace is in them as well as on them who walk according to scriptural rules; and these good old ways bring us to rest in God, and produce a blessed Sabbath in our spirits. If you keep God's commands, Christ will "send the Comforter to you;" nay, Himself "will come unto you, and make His abode with you." Be much, then, in the performance of holy duties, and seek the enjoyment of God in ordinances. There you may behold the light of His countenance, and hear His pleasant voice. There you may be satisfied with the breasts of consolation. Through these blessed pipes you may derive solid joy, and experience ravishing sweetness. Improve scriptural truths, exercise spiritual graces, lay up reviving experiences, and the result of all will be refreshing comforts.

But, in addition to these, I counsel you to cultivate and cherish such thoughts as may be streams to feed and fill the well of solid and settled comforts in your hearts. On this point, let me offer you the following directions.

1. Lay up all your comfort in God alone. He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. There is not a beam of light or stream of joy, which proceeds not from this Sun and Fountain of grace and happiness. He who made all things with a word, can speak and make peace in

the troubled heart. To do this, is one of His royal, incommunicable prerogatives. "I, even I, am He that comforteth you." If God comfort, who can sadden? If God afflict, who else can comfort? The air lights not without the sun; the fuel heats not without the fire. So neither can any earthly instrument cheer up a drooping heart, when God suspends His influence; while, on the other hand, His children have often been encouraged and comforted in Him in the absence of all created sources of enjoyment. O christian! learn this divine art of drawing all your comforts immediately from God. Lay up your stock of comfort in "the Rock of Ages." This will be as "honey out of the rock," and as "water out of the fountain," that comes freely, sweetly, purely, and abundantly. If you lay up all your comfort in the streams, what will you do when the streams are cut off? If you hang your comfort on every hedge, it will be far to seek in a day of need. But if God be your portion, the antidote is at hand, so that you need not fear sudden and perplexing evils; for His very rod and staff shall comfort you. The thought of the fatherly heart, the faithful word, and powerful hand of Jehovah, will be to you an unfailing support in the fiercest shock of affliction. Hence holy David, renouncing all the world, exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but

Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." And if all else were gone, he would still have, in God, a sufficient portion. Hence it is, that the saints have been as mount Zion, and have remained undismayed and immovable amidst the waves, being settled on the Rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. O could you account God your exceeding joy, how sweetly and cheerfully could you go to His altar on all occasions! And if you lay up your comfort in God, you may know where to find it when you have need of it; and none can take away your joy, because none can take away your God from you.

2. Lay the stress of your comfort on free grace in justification. Here only is the spring of all your comfort. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God" Yea, we have peace within, in the inmost chambers of our own souls; for "we glory in tribulations also." Gratuitous justification is the ground of all consolation. Christ's righteousness imputed, is the sweetest word in all the Scriptures. Though Papists make a mock of it, let us make much of it. It is the brightest flower in our garden; the Jachin and Boaz of our gospel temple; the ladder on which our souls ascend to heaven. Our only comfort is bound up in the covenant of free grace. Cling to this; contend earnestly for this; let all go rather than this.

It is the chief article and principle of our religion, on which the Church stands, and without which it falls. O, then, let no mud defile this blessed stream. Study free grace; ascribe all to free grace; lay up thoughts of undeserved, distinguishing grace. Remember what our blessed Redeemer has done and endured. Let the dolors of His soul be the solace of your hearts. Fetch all your comfort from His bitter cross. Consider how fully He has satisfied divine justice; how large and liberal is the proclamation of His Gospel; how He opens His arms and His bosom to embrace repenting prodigals; how He bids all welcome, and never yet cast off any that came to Him; how He has pardoned infamous sinners, and has received gifts even for the rebellious. Revolve these in thy mind; bring the promises warm to thy heart; let thy hyssop of faith sprinkle the blood of Christ on thy conscience. Vague and general views of atoning mercy will afford no comfort. Its particular application to the soul can alone give solid peace. A hungry man takes little pleasure in gazing upon a feast, while he tastes not of it. David's table, spread with dainties in the midst of his enemies, rather vexed than pleased those envious spectators. It is a blessed thing to think of the pardon of sin, of justifying grace, adoption, reconciliation; but what comfort can we derive

from such contemplations, unless we can say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me; my Lord and my God; my Redeemer liveth; a crown of life is laid up for me?" O this, this is the life of our lives, the support of our souls! Yet, if you cannot always say, that grace is yours, that Christ is yours, and heaven yours; still, let your thoughts dwell much upon free grace. Brood not incessantly over your own vileness and unworthiness, but meditate on the gracious promises of God to the contrite and believing. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." By these, and similar Scriptures, you may have hope. Prayerfully ponder them, until they are stamped on your very heart. They are worth more than uncounted gold,—more than all the world,—to the doubting Christian, in his seasons of spiritual darkness.

3. Store up your clearest evidences of sincerity. The Spirit ordinarily conveys comfort by shining in upon His own work, making it perceptible to the believer himself, and enabling him to draw from it clear and satisfactory inferences with respect to his religious state. Guided by this inward irradiation, and comparing what he feels in his own heart with the teachings of the inspired word, he thus soundly and safely reasons. "The Bible declares, that 'whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' If I know my own heart, I do sincerely pray and perform other Christian duties. I, therefore, hope that I shall be saved. Again, an apostle has said, 'Grace and peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' But, unless I am utterly deceived, I do love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Hence I cannot but humbly trust, that I have the grace of God, and true peace with Him." In this argument, the first proposition is a scriptural assertion; the second is drawn from the believer's own consciousness; and then the Holy Spirit, witnessing to his sincerity and uprightness, conducts him to the demonstrative conclusion, that he is a child of God, and an heir of glory. The soul, by a reflex act, views in itself the seeds and germs of evangelical piety; and though it knows that these have not purchased its Redeemer's love, yet it justly

regards them as the sweet effects of that love. These divine ornaments of saving grace are the tokens of its betrothal to Christ, and the contemplation of them fills it with a serene and holy joy.

Reader! Have you these clear and satisfying evidences? Does the sanctifying Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are born of God? If your soul is all glorious within in sanctification, it is a good sign that your clothing is of wrought gold in justification. Make sure your effectual calling, and then you will make your election sure also. To this end, study the work of grace within you. Inquire diligently into the marks of its genuineness. Rest not in any hasty or superficial view. Search to the very centre of your spiritual being. Probe all your feelings; lay bare all your motives; drag into light your most hidden affections. Try yourself impartially and thoroughly by the word of God. And if, when the examination is concluded, you find substantial reasons for the hope that you are sincerely and truly a disciple of Christ, then lay up the result for a time of need. Write it down, that you may have it to show against the questionings of an unbelieving heart. Record the means by which you obtained satisfaction—the time—the place—together with the low state you were in before the Lord thus visited you from on high. Record the various cir-

cumstances connected with the comforts which followed, their seasonable bestowment, their powerful entrance, their clear and reviving evidence. Record their gradual infusion, or their sudden inrushing into your heart, with the strong and abiding impression which they left upon you. Finally, record the sweet and strengthening effects which they produced, that hereafter, in the multitude of your disquieting thoughts within you, they may again delight your soul.

4. Lay up tears in God's bottle—prayers in God's book—comforts in others' breasts—and promises in your own. You must lay up many tears in God's bottle. Comfort is the special portion of mourners. It is promised by God, purchased by Christ, and applied by the Spirit of comfort to those who weep in Zion, "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is the constant design of our Heavenly Father to comfort those that are cast down, to heal the broken in heart, and to revive the contrite ones. Do you mourn for your sins? God will comfort you in your mourning. Repentance is the prelude to peace. In Hebrew, the same word which signifies primarily to repent, denotes also, in its secondary sense, to cease from sorrow; thus indicating that penitence ends in joy. The Jews

fable, that with such as weep in the night, the stars and planets weep, and that if they let the tears fall down their cheeks, God is ready with His bottle to receive them, which He pours, they say, upon the enemy's edicts to blot the writings, that the Jews may not be injured by them. This, though a mere fancy, may yet serve to illustrate God's care for the pious mourner. Certain it is, that God is much affected with His children's tears, and treasures them up, that they may be converted into their future comfort. The shedding of penitential tears is a spiritual seed-time. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and rich and full shall be the harvest of such precious sowing. This briny water shall be turned into refreshing wine. According to the depth of your sorrow will be the height of your comfort. Not a tear shall be lost that is of the right sort. Every gracious sigh rises before the Lord as grateful incense; and every drop distilled from a broken heart, shall in time multiply to a flood of joy. Who was more dissolved in tears than penitent David? And who had a heart more full of holy peace, or a tongue more full of the high praises of God, than that sweet singer of Israel? O grieve much for sin, and you shall rejoice in, and for your grief. Plenteous tears prepare for, and usher in plenteous joy.

Lay up many prayers in God's book, as well as many tears in His bottle. Be frequent and importunate in your approaches to the throne of grace. The sighs of your spirits will be wafted back by the sweet breezes of God's Spirit. The Spirit of grace will breathe into your bosoms a spirit of peace. As prayer goeth up, comfort comes down. God makes His children joyful in the duty of prayer, as well as in the house of prayer. "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." Prayer reaches up to heaven, and brings heaven down into the heart. Prayer seeks God's face; and, in prayer, the soul by faith sees God's face. And O how transporting is the sight! It scatters doubts, dispels fears, and spreads the sunshine of eternity over the gloom and darkness of earth. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." O christian! pour out thy heart to God, and He will pour into thee joys unspeakable and full of glory.

And then comfort others, as you are able. Communicate your experiences to afflicted souls, and they will return to you with enhanced preciousness, and in redoubled measure. There is much pleasure in opening our hearts to Christian

friends. When you say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul," He will do more for your soul. If you help others, He will help you. You little know how it may comfort you, to impart comfort to those around you. There is no envy in spiritual things. It is the characteristic of a child of God to long that the joy which he himself feels, may be diffused as widely as possible. And thus God makes the breast of one believer a store-house of comfort to many. "Whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation;" and that not only by way of sympathy and affection, but of intercourse and communication. Besides, the more you comfort others, the more you will have to pity and comfort you. The law of gratitude will engage them, and the light, which you have imparted to them in the day of their sadness, they will reflect back upon you, when the shadow is on your own soul.

Store up in your hearts the precious promises of God's word. "This," said David, "is my comfort in affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." This was his portion, his heritage, and his song in the house of his pilgrimage. The promises of the Gospel are designed to encourage and cheer the believer in all his doubts, and temptations, and conflicts. And for this reason, the

Bible is full of them. It has been observed, that the Covenant of Grace is mentioned distinctly a hundred times, and by clear and necessary inference a thousand times, in the Book of God. All these promises God has laid in, "that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." And not only has He promised, but, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, He" has "confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things"—His promise and His oath—"in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Promises are sacred anchors, which keep the soul unmoved amidst the tossing waves of this changeful and troubled world; white sails which, filled with the breath of the Spirit, waft it to the haven of rest. Promises are conduits, by which the waters of joy are conveyed to us from the great reservoir, Christ. Promises are the teats which feed and nourish the lambs of the flock. Promises are the key, by which the more mature Christian unlocks the celestial treasury, and obtains supplies that make him rich in grace, and rich in comfort. O, then, treasure up these divine antidotes, that you may have them always at hand for the support and solace of your fainting soul.

If you are a true believer, they belong to you. They are yours by hereditary right. Faith has made you a co-heir with Christ, brought you into a vital union with Him, given you an interest in His obedience and sacrifice, a participation in His reward, and so a claim to all the promises, which "in Him are yea and amen." And they are yours by the right of fitness. Through the renewing and sanctifying energies of the Holy Spirit, you possess those moral qualities, which are the required conditions of conditional promises. Thus, if Christ be yours, and if His purifying Spirit dwell within you, the promises are yours by a double charter; and you may safely appropriate all their comfort, and build on them, as on a sure foundation, your present and your eternal hope.

Thus, dear reader, have I endeavored to assist you in laying up these four needful and invaluable treasures; truths, graces, experiences, comforts. Let not thy soul be found destitute of these, nor of a large share of them. Especially, be not unheedful of the last. Let not the consolations of God be of small account in thy esteem. Prize them above all worldly joys; and carefully store them up. They are not the least useful or necessary portion of the Christian's treasure. They will fit you for the service of God, nerve you for suffering, fortify you against temptation, and com-

pensate you for all the labors and sacrifices which the cause of your Master may require of you. In toil, in conflict, in affliction, "the joy of the Lord shall be your strength." At present, you may be dandled upon the knee of God's fatherly indulgence, cheered by His smile, and delighted with the tokens of His favor. You may be sitting at His high table, eating and drinking in His presence, and regaling your soul with the sweet refreshments of an assured hope. But consider how soon God may remove the feast, give you bare commons and water of gall, and fill your spirit with bitterness. You cannot expect to walk always by sight. Dark hours will come, when you must search out your path by faith in an unseen Redeemer. The Mount of Transfiguration is not to be your permanent dwelling place. You must descend again into the plain, and encounter its dust and strife, its sins, its fears, and its sorrows. You cannot hope to sail onward to heaven over an ever placid sea, with sunny skies above you, and prosperous breezes swelling your canvass. No, no; there will be times when the winds will rise, and the tempest burst upon you, and when, in the black and stormy night, with waves and breakers roaring around you, you will be compelled to cast out the anchors, and wish for day. Treasure up, then, the comforts which you now enjoy; ascribe

the glory of them only to God; and in the coming seasons of trial draw them forth, and use them for your support and encouragement. Plead them with the Lord, when He hides His face. Beseech Him to call to mind the former days, when His candle shone upon your head, and by His light you walked through darkness. Thus remembering the past manifestations of His kindness, and still trusting and loving Him whom now you see not, you shall in due time "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

CHAPTER XIV.

PRESERVATION AND INCREASE OF A CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE.

HITHERTO I have considered chiefly some directions for obtaining a spiritual treasure, together with particular instructions relative to the different portions of it. But it is no less necessary to beware of losing or diminishing this treasure. It is the part of wisdom to keep what is valuable, as well as to acquire it. A little negligence may lose suddenly that which has been gained with much diligence. Solomon has indeed said, "There is a time to cast away stones;" but there is no time to cast away these precious stones. You must preserve what you have, and be constantly gathering more. To assist you in so doing, ponder seriously the following directions.

1. Let not Satan rob or circumvent you. He is that evil one that envies a saint's treasure. Next to our reception of grace, he most grudges our growth in grace. He steals away "the seed of the word," lest it become a treasure of divine truths. The more a soul is fraught with good,

the more assaults will it suffer from this adversary of all good. As a pirate makes most at a richly laden ship, and as a thief breaks not into a beggar's cottage; so the Devil raises an uproar in the believer's breast, while he lets his own vassals live in peace. This juggler will "transform himself into an angel of light," that he may pick our pockets with more ease and less suspicion. As he foists in dangerous errors under the garb of truth, so he lures to damnable sins under the paintings of virtue. Beware of both. New notions may eat out the heart of religion, as effectually as corrupt practices. Satan may rob us of our treasure by subtle insinuations of new light, as well as by grosser temptations to works of darkness; for these drink up the marrow of those energies that should be laid out in spiritual exercises and duties. "Refuse, therefore, profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourselves rather to godliness." Strivings, though they should even be about the Scriptures and the law, may come to be "unprofitable and vain." Many great disputers have argued away much of their religion; or at least have filled their heads with notions, rather than their hearts with saving truths and pious affections. Precious saints have complained that even necessary disputes have put their spirits out of tune. You have little zeal enough for the essentials of

religion; let none be wasted on things indifferent. The Lord help you to prize more a fundamental truth, and a degree of saving grace, than a fine speculation, or victory over an antagonist. Take heed lest Satan dart into you a spark of false zeal, and blow it up into an eager flame for a mere opinion, to divert you from occupying your attention with the more weighty matters of Christianity. O be not ignorant of the various methods which he uses to get an advantage against you, that he may rob you of your treasure. The old serpent, when he was young, outwitted our first parents in their best estate; and now that he is grown more cunning by the experience of almost six thousand years, and we more foolish in this dotage of the world; there is great danger of our being undone by him. O let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. Keep out of Satan's road; hold him at a distance; suspect his wiles; and so resist his power, that neither his seven heads by plotting, nor his ten horns by pushing, may deprive us of our precious treasure.

2. Fill not your hearts with the world. Carnal men are exclusively devoted to the world, and are, therefore, called, "the men of this world," that have their portion here. Such a state of mind is totally inconsistent with the possession of heavenly treasure; for the more you admit the world into

your hearts, the more you thrust out divine things. As the shining sun eats out the burning fire, or as the abundance of weeds sucks up the virtue of the earth that should nourish the plants and fruit trees; so do riches choke the word by a wicked encroachment which they make upon the heart. The love of the world jostles out the love of God. Love and royalty can endure no rivals. It is true, that religion begets wealth, but the daughter devours the mother. Worldly-mindedness is directly opposed to heavenly treasures. O let not your hearts be in the world, though your heads and hands are in it. The heart is to be reserved for God. If idols are brought into that shrine, Christ will be banished from it. When riches increase, set not your hearts upon them. In primitive times, the saints cast their money and estates at the apostles' feet, thereby signifying, says an ancient writer, "that they were fitter to be trodden on, than doted on, or rather to be a step-stone to divine things, than a burden on our backs." But the sad truth is, that to many these outward things are rather a stumbling block to cast them down, than a footstool to lift them up. It is better to be without great estates, than to have them for a snare. Tremble lest you be overcharged with the cares of the world, or be bewitched with earthly delights. Be not like that

carnal Cardinal, who preferred his part in Paris to his part in Paradise; but say, as did a noble Grecian commander to a common soldier, "Thou art not Themistocles, take this trash to thee;" for so he called the Persian spoils, consisting of richest jewels and goodliest ornaments. Thus do thou scorn to load thyself with such unworthy baggage. Cast out those wares that will sink the ship of the soul. One staff will help you in your journey, but a bundle will prove a grievous burden. A garment fit for the body is easy and useful, but one that is too wide, or with a long train, is in danger of becoming troublesome both to the wearer and to others. I would not, indeed, have you despise the temporal mercies of God; yet make them not your chief portion. Install not the world in the throne of your hearts. Let not your precious souls, like the serpent, feed on dust. If you possess much of the world, let it not possess you. Here it is, that you have most cause to fear for yourselves. How many Demases are hereby shipwrecked! How many Sampsons have lost their best strength in the arms of this Delilah! Alas! thousands have been cheated of their spiritual riches by its syren songs, and bewitching charms; and, therefore, let us stand at a distance from it; and make no friendship with it. We have far more reason to dread its fawnings than its

frowns. A false friend will prejudice us more than an open foe. Let no earthly treasure take off our minds from that which is heavenly, lest we diminish the divine stock with which our souls are furnished.

3. Mortify the corruption of your hearts. Cast out those intestine enemies, carnal affections. Sin and grace are like two scales,—as one goes up, the other goes down; or like two buckets,—as the one ascends full, so the other descends empty. The more the heart is charged with sin, the more vacant is it of goodness. Sin is the thief in the candle that dims our light and comfort. Sin is the mire in the channel that stops the current of grace. Sin is the prodigal that wastes our fair revenue; the canker that mars all our enjoyments; the chief drawback to high attainments; the great barrier between God and the soul, which hinders communion with Him and communications from Him. The Devil, the world, and the flesh, are our most mischievous and mortal enemies; but of these the flesh is the nearest, and, therefore, the worst. Hence fleshly lusts are said peculiarly to fight against the soul. Temptations, which proceed from our own hearts, are of all others most dangerous. Unless the wicked one find something in us he can have no advantage against us. But our base hearts entertain little thieves within,

which open the door to Satan without, who comes to spoil us of our treasure. Take heed, therefore, of this wily, beguiling thing. Touch not the forbidden fruit; admit no parley with lust; commit no sin, though ever so secretly. A secret way of spending has exhausted large estates. Heart-sins, dallied with, and delighted in, will do your souls a deadly mischief. A privy stab may let out your life-blood, and an unexpected leak may sink a well laden ship. Let the Christian, therefore, when tempted to the commission of secret sin, say, with pious Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Consider how unsuitable and incongruous it is for a vessel of mercy to admit iniquity. It is as if a cup of gold were filled with the vilest filth. O let not your precious souls be filled with the loathsome impurities of sin! Remember your dignity and your duty, and "keep yourselves from an evil matter." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness;" mortify your earthly members; possess your vessel in sanctification and honor; purge out all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and thus you will not only maintain, but increase your treasure.

4. Observe the impulses of God's Spirit. Yield to His gracious and blessed monitions. Grieve Him not, lest you provoke Him to leave you. He is easily grieved, and will deal with you as you

deal with Him. Christ Jesus has left the Holy Comforter to supply His place, and now the Spirit is God's great Factor in the world. If He knock at your door, He comes to do you good. O slight Him not lest you incur an irretrievable loss. The Spirit never puts you upon duty, but He calls you to some profit. Now, it is good sailing when you have wind and tide to help you. Improve this advantage, lest if you miss it, you be left to your own strength, and then what can you do? The Spirit is that gentle nurse and strengthening hand that helps the infirmities of the dead or daunted child of God in prayer. O refuse not His assistance. The Spirit is that holy fire, which sets the soul in a flame for God. O quench it not. He comes attended with a goodly train of graces and comforts, called the fruits of the Spirit; and, therefore, labor to be filled with these fruits. It is true, that you cannot expect to have them as Christ had them, beyond measure; yet your portion will be a treasure, and will help you to maintain and increase the heavenly treasure in your heart. The incomes of the Spirit promote renewed acts of grace. As the sea ebbs and flows according to the influence of the heavenly bodies, so does grace in the heart move according to the operations of the Spirit. The more you yield yourselves to the guidance of the Spirit, the more

you will feel the assistance of the Spirit. This will be a preservative from sin, a preparation for duty, an evidence of your state, and an entrance into glory. If you thus "walk after the Spirit," "the peace of God," as well as the God of peace, "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It shall maintain a constant guard over you to prevent the furious assaults of your spiritual enemies, and be a safe convoy to your soul, to preserve it from rocks and sands, from storms and pirates, till it reach the haven of eternal Peace. O then, make much of the Spirit. Maintain familiarity with Him, and He will maintain your treasure. Keep up intercourse with Him, and He will keep His interest in you. Allies and confederates have the same friends and foes; and if you have the Holy Ghost to take your part, you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. If received faith cannot keep you, yet supporting power is able. Never have any fallen out of the hands of God. I beseech you, therefore, give up yourselves to the Spirit's guidance and government, and He will be your guard and defence. That God who preserves His people's bones, will preserve their souls; and He who keeps the feet of His saints, will also keep the fruits of His love within them. Cleave to Him without wavering, and "He that is able to keep

you from falling, will present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

5. Carefully watch your hearts. Although God has undertaken to guard you, yet you are bound to guard yourselves. "Keep thy heart with all diligence." In the Hebrew, the expression is very full and emphatic, implying that, in or above all keeping, thou shouldst take care of thy heart. Thou mayest and must look to other things; but above all, let thy eye be most intent upon the frame of thy heart, and thy study most directed to it. But why so? What great need of industry in watching the heart? Because, "out of it are the issues of life." All our treasure is there—our greatest stock and store. If the heart be neglected, our wealth is exposed to hazard. Keep thy heart, therefore, with all diligence; lock up thy treasure, and set a guard upon it; admit no strangers into this closet; let not other things make an inroad upon thee, or at least, a thoroughfare of thee. There is no keeping a treasure in a common room. A man that fears for his purse in a strange place, has always an eye upon it, and dares not let it go out of his sight. In a time of great robbing, a stranger suspects every one, and goes not forth unarmed. O consider you are strangers on this earth. Many thieves are abroad. They aim at you. They have plundered many of their trea-

sures, and cast down many strong men wounded. Look, then, about you; keep strict watch; be not found asleep on guard, like the foolish virgins, or Christ's own disciples; but gird up your loins, watch and be sober. And if drowsiness at any time seize on you, rub your eyes, shake off sloth, and awake out of sleep. When any one knocks at your door, boldly ask, who is there? Whence comest thou? Art thou a messenger sent from God, or from Satan? Art thou for me, or against me? What is thy end or errand? Make your thoughts stand still, till they have undergone an impartial trial, whether they have a pass and commission under the great seal of Heaven, and are warranted by the Word, and tend to the glory of God, and the eternal good of the soul. And though vain thoughts may sometimes step into thy heart; yet suffer them not to lodge there; for thy heart is not thine own; thou dost but keep it for thy Lord and Master. There He hath laid up a treasure; and if any thing be wanting through thy fault, thou canst not give a good account, but must be exposed to shame, and grief, and loss. Principally and particularly watch thy heart when thou art before God in duty. Beware of distractions, diversions, and excursions of spirit from God. These will waste and weaken thy treasure, by running out in a wrong channel, and diverting or

spoiling the soul's activity; for the narrow, shallow spirit cannot mind many things at once. Besides, wandering thoughts are as dead flies in the box of precious ointment. These vain cogitations obstruct the operations of grace, and insensibly steal away the affections from God. Even dust, though small, may hinder a clock from going. Raise your affections heavenward. Centre and settle your hearts upon God. Say to distractions, as Nehemiah did to his enemies, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Thus do you say to your trifling hearts, it is not fit that I should leave the work of God, to attend upon toys. I must mind my business, or I shall go behind in my spiritual trade. That man is in danger of becoming a bankrupt, who stands gazing at others, or runs playing at foot-ball on the market-day, when others are busy making bargains, and getting money. O Christians, you either gain something, or lose in every performance. If the heart be not fixed on God, you are on the losing hand. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Do what you do with all your might; pray when you pray; work when you work; but let not these things interfere. Set not up any idols in your hearts. Drive away that which may interpose between God and your souls, as Abraham

drove away the fowls that sat upon the sacrifice. The Jewish Rabbins say, that if a serpent bite a man by the heel, while he is at his devotions, he must not stop, nor stoop to shake it off; and heathens have recorded instances of some that have rather suffered their arms or legs to be burnt with a coal from the altar, than move whilst sacrificing. And should not Christians blush to think what slight occasions will divert them from God in duty? O learn from hence to be more instant and intent in worshipping God, so that your treasure may be preserved and augmented.

6. Be most jealous over yourselves after the sweetest enlargements. There is the greatest danger after you have been with God, and have loaded your souls with choicest treasures of refreshing incomes. I have observed, in Scripture, almost a score of instances, in which saints have met with their heaviest falls, immediately after God's doing some signal thing for them, or their doing some notable thing for God. And I appeal to experienced Christians whether they have not sustained the saddest shakings and losses, after the sweetest gains. Dear, barren years usually succeed to those of plenty. A great spending follows a time of great ingathering. A long journey comes after a good rest; and a sharp winter after a pleasant summer. God in His wisdom usually lets Satan

loose upon such as He has armed for the combat. Paul had Satan's messenger to buffet him after abundant revelations. Peter acted a devil's part in dissuading Christ from suffering, after he had acted an angel's part in acknowledging Him for the Messiah. Negligence has undone many an army, after famous victories. The conquered have gathered strength, and returned upon the conquerors when they were dividing the spoils. So is it often in the experience of the Christian. When the soul has been with God, and got its vessel well fraught with spiritual riches, then it is in greatest danger of pirates. Then Satan bestirs himself most. His malice and policy take that as the fittest season to foil and plunder the well-laden soul. And then, too, the soul is most apt to grow secure and carnally confident, and so gives Satan the greatest advantage. As a man who, having run fast, or worked hard, sits down and cools suddenly, endangers his health and life; so when the heart has been sweetly warmed with the love of God, and powerfully affected in a holy duty, it is then most in danger of a spiritual ague—a chill fit of deadness; for such a one blesses himself, and thinks now he may sit still, and take his ease, and then comes a fall. This is the believer's round; this his fluctuating condition in the world. Peter confesses Christ nobly; then magnifies himself too

confidently; then denies his Master shamefully; and at last goes out and weeps bitterly, and so is kindly received by his loving Lord. Thus is it with us all. Our course through this howling wilderness, is one of constant change,—now on the mountain, now in the slough—backward and forward—uphill and downhill—sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning. But how sad is it, that a Christian should so soon forget his enlargements, and so soon return to folly, after his heart is broken, and peace has been imparted to him! O why should the soul so quickly turn out of the way, in which it so lately had such encouragements? Why should we give Satan such occasion to represent and insinuate to the God of heaven, that His servants will not continue with Him, for all His present rewards, and promises of future happiness? Ah, is there not much reward in keeping God's commandments? Is there not more pleasure in holiness, than in any sin? Why should you think to eke out your spiritual delights with sensual pleasures? Reflect seriously upon what I say, and be afraid to stain your milk-white souls, that are newly washed in the blood of the Lamb, by wallowing in the mud of sin. Be ashamed to dishonor God, to torment yourselves, to gratify your grand enemy, and lose that in an instant, which was so hardly obtained. Be not

high-minded, but fear. Be jealous over yourselves, with godly jealousy. Rejoice with trembling; cast not off fear, nor restrain prayer before God. Keep your conscience tender, your eyes open, and your hearts resolved. Pray that the spiritual impressions which have been made upon your minds, may be deepened and perpetuated by the continued influence of the Divine Spirit. For, alas, the best man on earth, is no more than the Lord hourly makes him. We are like a staff that must fall, if the hand be removed, or a stone that descends, if not constantly carried upwards. If we were as good as Paul or Peter, we should fall foully, without supporting grace. Be, therefore, jealous of yourselves after enlargements, and take heed, lest by security, you become a prey to the Devil.

7. Another help for continuing and increasing this good treasure of the heart, is, to be frequent and exact in examining the heart. Review carefully and often the frame of your spirits. Commune with your heart, and ask what it gets or loses every day. Wise tradesmen often investigate their accounts; and provident housekeepers look into their provision to see how it holds out, and where there is most danger of want. O Christian! be serious in this self-sifting work, and keep a distinct reckoning how things are with you,

whether you are gaining or losing ground. Censure yourself as sharply as if you were your own enemy. Study your state, try your ways, deal faithfully with your soul; for you must undergo a critical search at the great day; and even in this world, God may "search you as with candles," and rouse you from your carnal security. Before such a trying time shall come, endeavor to ascertain clearly your true character and standing. Compare what you are now with what you were formerly. In this manner, you may form some just idea of your real condition. Such a course of rigid self-scrutiny will help you much against losing ground. It will prevent apostacy, and will prepare you for the work of thankfulness or of repentance, according to what you find in your heart. Even should the result of the trial be most distressing and alarming, yet the knowledge of this fact will itself be an incentive and a means to reparation. O, then, take time to examine. In the multitude of engrossments abroad, be not a stranger at home. You will find work enough there. Bishop Hall has well said, "The varieties of an ever changing condition, whilst we are in this vale of misery, cannot be without perpetual employment for a busy soul. Therefore, O God, let me be dumb to all the world, so that I may have a tongue for Thee and mine own heart."

In the same spirit are these lines of the devout Herbert.

"Sum up at night what thou hast done by day,
And in the morning, what thou hast to do.
Dress and undress thy soul, mark the decay
And growth of it; if with thy watch, that too
Be down, then wind up both; since we shall be
Most surely judged, make thy accounts agree."

8. Be timely in repairing spiritual decays. If you find your piety declining, rest not satisfied for a moment. Let not an ill matter go on, for the further it proceeds, the worse it becomes. A little rent in a garment, if neglected, grows large and incurable. A breach in an embankment is quickly closed at first; but in process of time it is widened to a destructive inundation. Suits in law are easily adjusted in the beginning; and differences amongst friends may be soon composed at their commencement. But when contentions beget animosity, and then a mutual grudge, the agreement is rendered exceedingly difficult. If you miss your way upon a road, you may, at first, readily step back, and rectify your error; while the longer you persist in a wrong direction, the more laborious and uncertain will be your return. Many diseases, which have proved fatal in the end, might have been cured, had they been looked to in time. It is, therefore, a great principle of

practical wisdom, to resist the beginnings of evil. It is far easier to keep out an enemy, than to turn him out when he has once gained a lodgment. The juice of a lemon may be wiped from a knife, when first sprinkled on it, so that no stain shall remain; but, by abiding there, it corrodes the metal, and leaves an indelible impression. So guilt is more easily removed immediately after it is contracted, than when it is long deferred. Delay doubles the criminality, and makes the wound deeper. Peter, by a speedy repentance, had his peace quickly restored; while David's long absence from God procured for him a heavier burden, and more bitter sorrows. And from this sad experience, he learned in after times not to postpone the work of amendment and obedience. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." O reader! learn, like him, to cast off all procrastination. Vow this day, that you will give yourself no rest, "till you have found a place for the Lord" in your heart. Let not the night close upon you, until you can say, through grace, that your soul rests in God, and God rests in His love to you; and if you die in that sleep, you shall sleep in Jesus. Go to God, with all your darkness and declension, and say to Him, "Lord, I feel my heart growing hard

and dead. Thou dost not grant me Thy wonted presence. Sin is encroaching upon me; temptations prevail against me; my spiritual affections are becoming languid; and all seems going to wreck within me. Yet I am not satisfied with this declining state. I cannot live at a distance from Thee. I dare not neglect the means of my recovery. O revive Thy work. Restore Thy quickening Spirit. Repair and make visible in my soul Thy glorious image, which consists in 'knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.' Renew in my heart former affections, and let me again rejoice in Thy wonted favor." Thus betake yourself, first to your own heart, and then to God. Use your utmost endeavors to recruit with speed your treasure of truths, graces, comforts, and experiences. As a candle, newly extinguished, will quickly catch fire; so the smoking flax of your expiring piety will quickly blaze up afresh, and send the warmth of holy love and joy into every corner of your cold and cheerless bosom. Say with the same sweet Herbert, whom I just now quoted,

"Sin is still hammering my heart,
Unto a hardness void of love;
Let softening grace, to cross his art,
Drop from above."

9. Diligently employ whatever gifts you have

received, in seeking to promote the good of others. Mental and spiritual treasures have this peculiarity, that the more they are expended, the more they increase. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal shall it be measured to you again." We see that, in other things, use makes prompt and perfect. It is chiefly use which makes the right hand stronger than the left. A key much used is bright, while disuse makes it rusty. A pump, much used, brings forth water easily and abundantly. Thus it is in human learning, gifts, and graces—giving enriches the giver. "A liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." A liberal soul, as the Hebrew word signifies, is a soul of blessing, because it is a blessing to others, and is the more blessed by God; for to him who uses well what he has, shall more be given. The principles of grace were not imparted to you by God, that they might lie dead and buried in your heart. You are to stir up His gifts within you; to employ your stock, and put your money in circulation. True piety is always active and diffusive. However excellent a thing may be in itself, it is practically worthless, if it be unemployed. The richest

soil is of no value without cultivation. There is doubtless in the bowels of the earth, inaccessible to all human art and labor, a world of precious metals; but who is the richer for them? It is improvement which gives a value to all blessings. A penny in the purse is worth many talents at the bottom of the sea. That is our good, which does us good, and by which we do good to others; and the more we do good, the more we are good. Be active, therefore, for God. Read, pray, meditate, instruct and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. Do every thing with your might, as men who are bound straight for heaven yourselves, and would draw as many with you as you can. O how this will enrich you, and increase your stock! Impress deeply and effectually on your minds the important truth, that it is the property of real grace to be communicative, and that the blessing annexed to such an exercise of it is perpetual growth. The Christian gets most by giving most. God helps those who are ready to help the souls of others.

10. Be thankful for treasures received. Give God praise, and He will give you more grace. As our gratitude ascends to Him, His mercy descends to us. Man's blessing God brings down more blessings from God. Adore free grace, and you shall have more fruits of free grace. You are

bound to bless God for worldly comforts and earthly treasures; how much more, then, for heavenly riches. Should we bless Him for filling our houses with goods, and satisfying our appetites with bread; and shall we not bless Him for filling our minds with truth, and our hearts with grace? Must we bless Him for a crust, and shall we not much more for a Christ? Shall we thank Him for earth, and not for heaven? I fear Christians are greatly deficient in this delightful and angelic duty of praise. They complain much of their defects and imperfections; and this is good in its proper place, and season, and proportion, as tending to humble them, and to excite them to more earnest endeavors for a better state. But, at the same time, you ought to be thankful for what you are, and for what you have. Humility and gratitude are very consistent, and mutually strengthen each other. You may and ought to bewail your barrenness. Yet you must also praise God for whatever degree of fruitfulness you are enabled to exhibit; for all you have attained is the effect of His special grace. From Him alone is your fruit found. He alone hath tilled, and sown, and given the increase; and to Him belongs all the praise. Pay, then, for the old with thanks, and obtain new by faith. Admire His free grace, that you have any spiritual incomes. Though you have

not what you desire, yet you have more than you deserve, and so much as to call for devout thankfulness. He is a churlish creature, who drowns past kindnesses in a sea of desires after more. I appeal to thine own conscience, whether thou hast not something in thy soul worth thanks. Hast thou not seen thy sin and misery, and laid them more to heart than outward troubles? Dost thou not prize communion with God above all the world, and long for it more than for all earthly delights? You cannot deny that you have received sweet impressions of divine truth, and had many experiences of the loving kindness of God. You cannot deny that some measure of grace and comfort has been imparted to you; and that, feeble and trembling as your hope of salvation often is, it is still the one star that gilds your horizon, and shines upon the otherwise unbroken darkness of your pilgrimage. Enumerate your mercies, and you will soon see ample occasion for gratitude. Especially, recount your spiritual blessings "in heavenly things in Christ Jesus." Thus, when the holy Psalmist would stir up all within him to praise God, he begins by reckoning up his spiritual mercies. And canst thou not say, that God has satisfied thy heart, and replenished thy soul "with good things?" Lay thy hand upon thy heart, and ask it whether thou hast

not abundant cause of thankfulness? If so, then praise and bless Him accordingly. One great end which God has in view in bestowing mercy, and in answering prayer, is, that the soul may be drawn more closely to Him in love and gratitude. This is the tribute of glory which is due from the creature to the Creator; and to call it forth is a prominent design of the Divine dispensations, both in providence, and in grace. O, then, I beseech you, show not yourself ungrateful. Praise God for what you have received, and for the sure ground on which you hope for more. Perform your duty, and trust Him for the fulfillment of His promise. Bless Him that He has laid up so large a treasure in Christ for needy souls. Bless Him that He has already laid out so much on the myriads whom He has redeemed, and brought to heaven, and filled to overflowing with grace and glory. And bless Him that He has begun the same process of sanctification in your own heart, and will not cease from it, until it is perfected in eternal holiness and joy. You are wont, it may be, to question the reality and genuineness of the work of grace within you. But the practice of this duty of thankfulness will give you clearer evidence of your sincerity; will preserve whatever grace you have, and be the means of farther accessions to it. The apostle Paul has linked unthank-

fulness and unholiness together, as connected steps in the same dread descent. So, on the other hand, in your upward progress towards heaven, the more thankful you are, the more holy you will be. God loves and blesses the grateful worshipper. Praise is comely in His sight, and thankful souls shall receive the richest tokens of His favor and blessing. Who was ever loaded with more riches of grace than Paul? And who was ever more full of thankfulness, or sounded out the praises of God in more emphatic strains? Praise was on his lips, because grace was in his heart; and the more he magnified grace, the more grace was increased within him. Every breath, let out in praise, drew in new supplies of grace. Thus do you glorify God, and He will satisfy you—pay Him this rent, and He will not turn you out of doors—give Him this tribute, and you shall have your freehold. Praise Him for the little you have here, and you shall have fullness of grace and glory for which to praise Him through all eternity.

"Thou that hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more—a grateful heart.
See how Thy beggar works on Thee,
By art.

He makes Thy gifts occasion more,
And says, If he in this be crost,
All Thou hast given him heretofore
Is lost.

But Thou didst reckon, when at first
  Thy word our hands and hearts did crave,
What it would come to at the worst
  To save.

Perpetual knockings at Thy door,
  Tears sullying Thy transparent rooms,
Gift upon gift—much would have more,
  And comes.

This notwithstanding, Thou went'st on,
  And didst allow us all our noise;
Nay, Thou hast made a sigh and groan
  Thy joys.

Not that Thou hast not still above
  Much better tunes than groans can make;
But that these country-airs Thy love
  Did take.

Wherefore I cry, and cry again;
  And in no quiet canst Thou be,
Till I a thankful heart obtain
  Of Thee.

Not thankful, when it pleaseth me;
  As if Thy blessings had spare days;
But such a heart, whose pulse may be
  Thy praise."

HERBERT.

CHAPTER XV.

MEDITATION A MEANS OF INCREASING HEART-TREASURE: SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION.

Among the directions for maintaining and promoting religion in the soul, the practice of devout meditation should hold a prominent place. Yet, as this topic is of large extent, and specially important, I have deemed it most proper to give it a separate consideration. In presenting it, I shall set before you some of the most appropriate subjects of meditation; and then show the influence of such meditation in preserving and invigorating holy affections.

Christian meditation is the contemplative and earnest fixing of the mind on the great spiritual realities which the Bible has revealed to us. It should be connected with prayer and the study of Scripture, to awaken and inspire it, and to furnish it with suitable themes; yet it differs from both. Prayer is the converse of the soul with God; the direct outpouring of its wants and desires before the throne of Infinite Mercy. The reading of Scripture is the exercise by which the soul seeks to

learn God's will, and to gather in the communications which He has made of His character and purposes. But meditation is the soul's conference with itself; the discourse which it holds with truth obtained, and impressions received, in the secret sanctuary of its own consciousness. It is not simple revery or aimless speculation; nor is it a mere effort of the memory to recall and treasure up religious instruction. It is the set and solemn endeavor of the soul to bring home to itself divine things; and so to revolve, ponder, and digest them, as to work their transforming power into every element and faculty of its being. The subjects of thought best suited to such an exercise will now be laid before you. You are not, however, to suppose, that the entire enumeration is to occupy you at any one time. This is not practicable, and would not be the most judicious method, if it were. In order that you may derive the fullest benefit from meditation, it should be engaged in at regular intervals, either immediately before or after your seasons of private devotion; and, at each of these periods, you will find it most useful to employ yourself particularly on some one department of truth, provided you do not view it as isolated, but in its broad and comprehensive relations to the whole system of truth. Thus traverse successively the different portions of the vast field of Divine

Revelation, until its entire compass shall have been brought within the scope of your contemplations.

Let your thoughts be exercised upon the infinite, eternal, and incomprehensible majesty of God. Here, it is true, you launch upon a boundless and fathomless ocean; but, guided by the chart of Scripture, and confining your search within the range of its discoveries, you will not wander into unprofitable and irreverent speculations, or lose yourself in recesses which no finite intellect can explore. Let your meditations be of the following purport. O what a holy, omniscient, omnipresent Spirit is the almighty Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth! What transcendent mysteries are locked up in the Trinity of Persons, in the Unity of Essence! How impossible is it for a mortal eye to penetrate the inaccessible light in which Deity is veiled! "No man hath seen God at any time." Yet, "the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him." In the person of an incarnate Redeemer I see God embodied, and made manifest to human sense. In His character and offices, I behold a glorious reflection of the Divine attributes, and read an exhibition of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and love to the sons of men, which astonishes and awes, while it melts and subdues me. By

these, I know and feel what a Being Jehovah is. O how inexpressible is the glory of His nature! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. He is clothed with honor and majesty; thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him. He is the God in whose hands my breath is, the Searcher of hearts, the Hearer of prayer, the Lord of Hosts, the King of saints. O my soul, adore Him for His greatness, fear Him for His justice, love Him for His goodness, trust Him for his faithfulness, worship Him in the beauty of holiness, and delight thyself in His matchless perfections.

Fix your thoughts on the works of creation. Study this varied and speaking volume, in every page of which you will find fresh matter for wonder and reverence. As you look out over the expanse of land and sea, or upward to the starry firmament, thus reflect within yourself. Surely, this goodly fabric proclaims aloud the glory of the Creator. How full and rich is the earth which He has made; how vast the compass of the skies, which He has stretched out as a curtain! How admirably hath He laid the beams of His chambers in the waters, and suspended the earth upon

nothing! How firmly hath He built His stories in the heavens, and fixed the glorious constellations as fountains of light! O what beauty must there be in "the Father of lights," whose word kindled all these resplendent luminaries! And while these stupendous orbs declare His power, the least and lowest of His works no less expressively show forth His praise. Every creature has a tongue to speak the wisdom of its Author. Each herb, plant, flower—each blade of grass, twig or leaf, worm or fly, scale or feather, billow or meteor—is full of mysteries that puzzle the most profound philosophy, and evince the exhaustless skill and resources of the universal Maker. And how adapted is all to the purposes for which it was formed! What proofs of beneficent design and admirable contrivance are manifested in the structure of man and beast—in the mechanism of the earth and skies—in the succession of day and night—in the change of the seasons—and in all the varied and complicated processes by which Nature works out her appointed ends! Every where I behold the footsteps of God. "The invisible things of Him, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world"—from the order, beauty, and beneficence, which pervade all the work of His hands.

Contemplate the worth, the dignity, the immor-

tality of your own soul. You cannot think without it, and should you not often think of it? Thus meditate; What divine spark is this, which God has breathed into a lump of perishable clay? What is that mysterious principle—that undying essence, which, implanted in my bosom, distinguishes my nature and my destiny from those of the various orders of animal life which I behold around me? This imperishable soul, which God has created and placed in my dying body, is greater and better than the world in which it dwells, and cannot be satisfied with all that the world can give. It must live, in bliss or woe, when the world shall be no more. It is a spiritual being, of the same nature with the angels, and like them can never die. It possesses vast energies, and ever active desires; and, like the dove of Noah, flies over the wide sea of the universe, but finds no place on which to rest its weary affections. God alone is the centre and the home of this tossed wanderer. The soul is capable of communion with God in spiritual exercises, and in immortal happiness; and, when dislodged from the body, it must return to God, to receive from Him an eternal portion of glory or of despair. O my soul, thou art in constant motion, but whither art thou moving? What art thou doing? What is thy condition? What will become of thee, when thou

art summoned hence? Soar upward, my soul, and mind things above. Debase not thy noble nature by the pursuit of objects below thyself. Seek to be enriched with an interest in Christ, and to be adorned with the graces of His Spirit. Make God thy portion; lay up thy treasure in heaven; and then return unto thy rest, for the Lord will deal bountifully with thee.

Meditate on the Word of God. Let it dwell richly in you, and let your thoughts dwell frequently on it. What is in the Bible is God's; but when transferred to your heart, it becomes your own. Thus, then, ponder this delightful theme. O the infinite condescension of Jehovah! What is worthless man, that God should write to him so large an epistle from heaven with the hand of His blessed Spirit? What care has God taken to direct, incite, and encourage this fallen and sinful creature to seek eternal happiness! What precepts, promises, threatenings, examples, has He set forth in His Word for our instruction and salvation! O the antiquity and authority, the excellence and efficacy, the power and purity, the perfection and sufficiency, the verity and perpetuity of this Holy Book! When I take it up, methinks I take wonders into my hand; and when I look within it, I meet with mysteries, which the wisdom of the world can never fathom, but through

whose depths a little child, led by the Divine Spirit, may wade in safety. How plainly held forth in it are those necessary truths and duties, which lead the soul to God and heaven! How familiarly does God here converse with man! How precious and how suited to my state are the promises contained in these inspired pages! Every line has its weight, and comes to me as pertinently as if my own name were inscribed in it. What reviving does it bring to my heart! Search all human writings, and no such virtue or savor will be found. O blessed be God for the Holy Scriptures!

Let your thoughts dwell much on the glorious works of Divine Providence. O how sweet are they! Whoso is wise will consider them. Take a view of the diversified and wonderful dispensations of God in the government of the world. Consider the days of old, and the years of many generations. Recollect what Scripture records of the drying up of the sea; the rolling back of Jordan's waves; the making the sun and moon hang fixed and still in the firmament. Reflect on the miracles of mercy towards the Church, and of judgment on her enemies. Consider, too, what wonders God has wrought in thine own days, and before thine own eyes. O what national, domestic, personal deliverances hast thou seen; deliverances that may

well astonish the atheist, and silence unbelief forever! Thou canst not want matter for devout meditation, if thou but take a strict survey of the course of thine own life. The particular providences which have taken place in reference to thy soul, thy body, thy estate, thy friends, and all thy concerns, are enough to furnish thee with abundant and fruitful themes for holy musing. Those dealings of God which, seen in their beginning, and in their separate parts, appeared so harsh and unlovely, how beautiful are they now when beheld in their complete development, and in their perfected results! You saw not then, but you have since fully seen, what the Lord designed in his strange dispensations. O the happy connection, symmetry, and harmony of all things, as thus directed by the hand of Providence, and made to combine in one grand end—the glory of God, and the highest good of His children! "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Think humbly upon man's apostasy. Let your thoughts often go back to the origin of all our present sinfulness and wretchedness, in such reflections as these. Woe is me! Whence am I fallen and whither? God made man "upright, but be has sought out many inventions." Man was "created after the image of God;" now he is defaced after the image of the Devil. Once he

was entire and straight; now he is deformed and crooked in all his faculties. Once he was holy and happy; now he is filthy and subject to all misery. Once he was the darling of God, lord of the world, and a fit companion for the blessed angels; now he is the enemy of his Maker, the slave of Satan, and the basest part of the whole creation. O mutable free will, that chose to fall, when it might have chosen to stand! O how little was the pleasure, and how lasting is the pain! But let me not find fault with Adam. If thou, my soul, hadst been in his place, thou wouldst have done as he did, for thou doest the same every day. "Sin is the trangression of the law;" and this holy law thou breakest every moment. O my soul, what a miserable case art thou in! What enmity to God, what aversion from good, what tendency to all evil is in thy depraved nature! Woe is me, where is the light in my understanding, the rectitude of my will, the regularity of my affections? Where is the tenderness of my conscience, the tenacity of my memory, and the victory over my corrupt and unruly passions? Lord, where am I, and what will become of me, unless thy grace interpose to "deliver me from the body of this death?"

Think, O think much and deeply, on the amazing work of man's redemption. It well becomes the

ransomed of the Lord to ponder, in heart-melting meditations, the way of their recovery. Come, then, and survey this matchless wonder. Call up all thy powers, and say; Here stand and ruminate, my soul, upon the sweet, transcendent contrivance to save lost man. O why was it, that the heart of God was moved for men, and not for devils? They were as near and dear to Him in their first estate, and as perfect in their natures, as men. Was it because man had a tempter, and they had none? Certainly not. For though that may be a truth, yet it can furnish no reason why God should choose men for salvation, and leave devils to be reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. No, no; free grace alone made the difference. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But what was the method of man's redemption? What were the mighty barriers to be removed, before mercy could stretch forth her hand to his rescue? To open the way for this, the Son of God, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity, must become man, put himself in the sinner's stead, assume his guilt, and make satisfaction to Divine justice, by bearing in His own body the penalty due to transgression. O stupendous mystery! O surpassing mercy! Who could have devised such a scheme? Who durst have desired such a thing, that God should part with His only

begotten Son for such an end? O the manifold wisdom of God! O the inconceivable love of the Father in sending the Son, and of the Son in consenting to come, on such an errand! "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." O the wonders in the strange union of His divinity with humanity, in the completeness of His person, in the fullness of His offices! O the bitterness of His temptations, His reproaches, His agonies, His death—sharp to Him, sweet to us! These will be subjects of deepest thought and of loftiest praise, to the spirits of the justified, through all eternity.

Meditate on the terms and provisions of the Gospel. Often consider how, and upon what conditions, Christ and all His benefits may be made over to you. This you will find to be by a cordial acceptance of Him in His mediatorial offices, as the alone ground of justification, sanctification, and redemption. In view of this gracious arrangement, let such thoughts as these fill and dilate your bosom. O strange and boundless love! God might have appointed, as conditions of salvation, the performance of unheard-of labors, or the endurance of long years of suffering. He might have said, Thou must either keep the moral law exactly, or die eternally. But, instead of this, He has said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be

saved." Nor has He left thee, O my soul, to do this by thine own strength, which had been as impossible as the former; but He, who requires faith of thee, promises to give faith to thee. Faith is secured in the covenant no less than forgiveness. Christ has purchased grace to believe as well as salvation for believers. O blessed contrivance! Every thing is laid upon our perfect and all-sufficient Surety. He is exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins." He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Author and the Finisher of our faith. He saves to the uttermost all to whom He gives faith, and none of them shall ever miscarry. This, this is the very marrow of the Gospel, that Christ, as the Surety of believers, has undertaken to bear them all to heaven, by the virtue of His atonement, and by the power of His Spirit; and He wants neither ability nor fidelity to fulfill His engagement.

Think, and think again, what interest you have in this Redeemer. All are not interested in Him. All will not be saved by Him. Multitudes will perish, even of those who hear the tidings of His mercy. Meditate, then, upon thy spiritual condition. Thus question thy soul. What is thy state? Where is thy standing? What share hast thou in Christ; what title to the promises of the

covenant? Hast thou a sound and saving faith; a thorough, heart-breaking and heart-melting repentance? I read in the word, that Christ becomes the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. O my soul, hast thou given up thyself to Him in the obedience of faith? What operations of the Spirit hast thou felt for thy effectual calling? What regenerating work has passed upon thee? Art thou translated from death to life, from darkness to light? Art thou, indeed, transplanted out of the old stock of thy corrupt nature into the new and living Vine? What personal application hast thou made of redeeming grace? Hast thou viewed a bleeding Christ with a bleeding heart, and looked on Him, whom thy sins have pierced, with contrite grief and believing joy? Hast thou accepted Jesus Christ in the fullness of His mediatorial character, as Prophet, Priest, and King, to subdue thy lusts, guide thee by His sceptre, and save thee in His own way? O my soul, be serious in this inquiry. It is no trifling matter, but of unspeakable moment to thee for all eternity. The way is strait and narrow. Thousands are deceived, and perceive not their fatal mistake, till all hope of remedy is past. The stroke of death will soon decide the question. O look to it, before that blow be given, lest it be forever too late.

When thou hast obtained satisfactory evidence of thy interest in Christ, then think with comfort on the rich privileges of believers. Here thou mayest have a spacious field for contemplation. God allows thee to solace thy soul in such thoughts as these. How incomparably excellent are the advantages conferred on the saints! What sayest thou, my guilty, weary soul? Is it nothing to have thy sins pardoned, thy debts paid, the bond cancelled which Divine justice held against thee? Is not an assurance of pardon the sweetest of all tidings to a criminal condemned to death, and waiting the hour of execution? And shall my condemned soul receive an acquittal, signed and sealed with atoning blood? Shall my filthy, naked soul be clothed with the blessed robe of Christ's perfect righteousness? O the riches of free grace! Shall such a base and bankrupt beggar become the beautiful spouse of the King of Glory? It was infinite mercy that kept me thus long out of hell; but shall the Lord also make this polluted soul an heir of heaven? Shall Jesus Christ be my elder Brother, the Spirit my Comforter, and God Himself my Father? O boundless and bottomless riches of free grace! Moreover, my soul, thou hast an interest in all the promises of the Gospel, the assistance of the Spirit in prayer, and unlimited access to the throne of mercy. The allotments of

Providence all work for thy good; the protection of the Almighty is over thy person, and His blessing on thy undertakings. Thou hast fellowship with the Father and with the Son, the benefit of communion with saints, and the attendance and service of holy angels. God, thy Redeemer and Upholder, will guide thee through life with His counsel, and at death receive thee to glory. And is not this the very height of preferment? Can thy most eager and soaring thoughts reach any further? No, no, my soul, God hath done for thee more than thy expectation, and all thy desire.

Now, then, my soul, reflect upon the obligations under which thou art thus laid. What does God require of thee in return for all these rich and royal favors? O set thyself to study duty; bring all thy feelings under a sense of the law of thankfulness; pray God to engrave that blessed law deeply on thy inmost powers; and, in the light of its teachings, consider well what thou oughtest to do. But here thou art brought to a stand. Alas, what returns can I make to my God for all these benefits? What can a poor, worthless worm do towards requiting infinite kindness. Myself, and all I am, or can do, are God's due; and here, O Lord, I offer up all to Thee, as a living sacrifice, and as a most just and reasonable service. O

that it may be acceptable through Jesus Christ! My heart, my lips, my life shall praise Thee. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." O that my heart were well tuned to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! Alas, my soul, how low and dull thou art; how cold and sluggish in thy poor returns for these rich receipts! Surely, thou wilt strike a sweeter and higher strain amongst the heavenly choir of saints and angels in eternal mansions. In the mean time, wake up thy drowsy heart; elevate the tone of thy affections; abound in the work of thankfulness; lay thyself out for the glory of thy Redeemer; serve Him with greater zeal and faithfulness; offend Him no more by thy ungrateful neglect; walk with God, wait upon Him, worship Him with all thy strength; do all thou canst in thy generation; hasten on apace towards heaven, and lift up thy head with exulting desire and hope, for the day of thy redemption draweth nigh.

Meditate much and seriously on the evil of sin. Think how offensive it is to God, how destructive to the soul; and let the view of its hatefulness lead you to abhor it, and to resist its workings in yourself. In this manner feel and speak concerning it. O what a monstrous, shocking, venomous thing is sin! It is the very epitome of all evil; more foul than the Devil himself; and so im-

measurably vile and abominable, that the most loathsome creature that crawls is fair and pure compared with it. It is a heart-plague, more terrible than all the bodily plagues and diseases to which man is subject—aye, worse than hell itself, for it made hell, and ever keeps alive its quenchless fires. O sin, what hast thou done? Was it not sin that cast the angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise, and has since cast thousands, yea, tens of thousands of souls headlong into eternal fire? Was it not sin that drowned the old world, that burnt the cities of the Plain, and that will, at the last day, set the whole world in a flame? Is it not sin, and sin only, that provokes God, grieves His Spirit, breaks His laws, and brings swift destruction on the impenitent? Nay, O my soul, consider, was it not sin that betrayed, arraigned, accused, condemned, crucified and buried the Lord of Life and Glory? O, then, who would have aught to do with this polluting, murderous thing? What fruit hast thou, my soul, from thy past intimacy with it, but shame, misery, and death? O what mischief it has done thee! What grief, and tears, and agonies has it cost thee! Yet even these are less bitter than its proper fruit, eternal damnation. God hates nothing but sin. O, then, my soul, hate thou sin with perfect hatred, and have fellowship no more with its unfruitful works

of darkness, lest thou offend the Holy One, gratify Satan, and ruin thyself forever.

Meditate much on the vanity of the world, and the uncertainty of all sublunary things. Often read thyself lectures on the instability of temporal possessions, and take off thine own fingers from playing with them, lest God use some severer course to lessen thy earthly attachments. Thus think. O my groveling soul, why art thou so fascinated with the world? What is it that thou seest in this garish strumpet to allure and entangle thy affection? How comest thou to dote upon her painted beauty? What real good, what solid comfort has she ever afforded thee? What are her profits but a little white and yellow dust, of the same nature and origin with the vile and perishing body in which thou dwellest, and far inferior to thy noble self? What are her honors but sorry bubbles, blown up by the breath of mutable men, that can kiss and betray with the same lips, praise and decry with the same slippery tongues? What are her pleasures but swinish epicurism, that debases the best part of human nature, transforms men into beasts, and leaves a stinging guilt behind? Alas, my soul, why wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not? What will riches avail thee in the day of wrath? Where is the hope of the worldling, though he hath gained much, when

God taketh away his soul? What was Cain the better for his fair cities, or Nimrod for his large dominions, or Absalom for his beauty, or Ahithophel for his policy, or Judas for his "thirty pieces," or Dives for his sumptuous fare? Hell-fire burns up all these; and heaven cannot be purchased with them. Alas, the fashion of the world passeth away, and when it is gone, what is a man advantaged for having been a millionaire, a lord, or a king? Death brings to the same low level the crown and the ploughshare, the princes's sceptre and the beggar's staff.

Exercise your thoughts on the present and final state of all men, and on the vast difference between the respective conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world, and their allotment in the world to come. Thus muse within yourself. I see the wicked flourish. They enjoy the world at will. They are not in trouble as other men, but eat and drink, and laugh and play, and change their sports for more delight, and wash their steps with butter, and have more than heart can wish. I see, on the other hand, the righteous afflicted by God, tempted by Satan, persecuted by the world; chastened every morning, and lying down with sorrow every evening; eating their bread with bitterness, and watering their couch with tears. O the keen, heart-rending griefs which they en-

dure, from the withdrawings of God's presence, from the unkindness of men, but especially from their own inward corruptions! Shall I, then, call the former happy, and the latter miserable? God forbid that I should so offend against the generation of His children. No, my soul, look not with carnal, but with spiritual eyes. "Judge righteous judgment." Know that he, and he only, is truly happy, not on whom earthly prosperity smiles, but who has the grace of God and the hope of heaven in his soul. Search the Scriptures, and see who are there accounted happy. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Yes, his "end is peace"—the harbinger and the beginning of eternal peace—whatever may have been his troubles by the way. Many a Crœsus, on the contrary, has experienced the truth of Solon's words, "No man can be pronounced happy, till we see him die." Often the worldly enjoyments of the ungodly forsake them before death. But even should they continue to the last, yet when the grim Summoner appears, they vanish away; and their poor, deluded votary, torn from earth and earthly delights, is driven into an unknown world; a world, for which he has no preparation and no desire; in which he has no God and no hope; and where he has no treasure but damnation, no home but the lake of fire.

O my soul, wisely consider the present and the eternal state of the righteous and the wicked, and choose rather to endure affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Let your thoughts frequently dwell on the state of religion around you, and on the condition and prospects of the Redeemer's cause throughout the world, that you may mourn or rejoice, pray or praise, as Zion triumphs, or appears to suffer defeat. On Paul's heart lay the care of all the churches, and shall you feel no concern for them? Say then to yourself; Let me feel the pulse of Christ's mystical body. How fares it with her? Is she in health, or is she sick? Under what diseases does she labor? Do her sacred lungs move strong and fast in prayer to God? Does she flourish in the pure and powerful administration of divine institutions? Is she fair as the moon in the holiness of her members; clear as the sun in the purity of her doctrines; terrible as an army with banners, in the strictness of her discipline, and in the energy of her movements against the powers of darkness? Do the lights shine clear in her candlesticks? Are her ministers as flames of fire? And do the faithful "walk in the light of the Lord?" Do they "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and con-

tribute to mutual edification? Or are they alienated and scattered by discord and divisions? Are they faithful and active in holding forth the word of life, and striving to bring the ruined and the lost of earth to the knowledge of redeeming mercy? Or are they compromising their principles, and losing their influence, by sluggishness, neglect, and conformity to the world? O my soul, look abroad over the great moral field, and exult or weep, as truth or error shall seem to be in the ascendant.

Think, O think often upon death, your own death. O that you were wise to consider your latter end! Amongst all your thoughts, let some be given to your dying day. Set a death's head before you, and thus meditate. O what a fading, dying creature I am! I dwell in a tottering tabernacle, in a house of clay, that is ready to be crushed every moment like a moth. This vile body of mine is made of perishable materials, and my life is like a vapor. O my soul, thou lodgest in a brittle case, which must soon be broken, and may be suddenly; and then thou launchest forth into the vast ocean of eternity. Death will shortly sever the bond that unites thee to thy companion, the body. Nature abhors the dissolution; but what says grace? Is the sting of sin plucked out by the death of Christ? Has the Lord of Life

warmed and perfumed the grave for thee? Canst thou look beyond death to glory, and welcome the king of terrors as thy Father's messenger, to take thee by the hand and lead thee into His palace and presence-chamber? If thou hast a well founded hope of God's love, thou wilt long, like a weary traveller, to be at home and at rest. Thou wilt desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. See to it, then, my soul, that thou hast not thy work to do, when thy time is gone. Be ready for the fatal stroke. It is a solemn business to die. It is to be done but once, and it must be well done, or thou art undone forever. Look upon every day as thy last; and defer not till to-morrow the repentance and faith required of thee to-day. Thus, whenever called, thou wilt meet God in peace, and be found of Him in peace.

Pass on a little further in thy meditations, and contemplate the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. O what an illustrious day will that be, when the great trumpet shall sound, the graves be opened, the dead raised, the living changed; when the holy angels shall gather, from the ends of the earth, the scattered dust of all the saints, from righteous Abel to the latest born of the Gospel, and, uniting the glorified soul to the glorified body, convoy them up to meet their Lord in the air, that they may with Him

judge the world of ungodly sinners. Methinks, too, I hear the howlings of despairing souls, whose bodies, dragged out of their tombs, are forced to come trembling before the awful Judge. O fain would they lie buried forever in darkness! Appear they dare not, yet appear they must, and meet the retributive award, which their own consciences but too well anticipate. Methinks I see the throne set, the books opened, and myriads of rational creatures attending, to receive their irrevocable sentence. On the right hand, stand the saints in white raiment, lifting up their heads before their beloved Husband, who absolves them, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Welcome home from a weary world—the eternal mansions are waiting for you —sit down on these thrones—take these palms of victory into your hands—I place these crowns upon your heads—and you shall be with ME forever. On the left hand, are ranged the affrighted multitudes of the wicked, expecting the dreadful doom, "Depart! ye cursed;" wishing they had never been, or that now they might not be; and vainly calling to the senseless rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. The wrath of the Lamb! O this is the one terrible thought that withers their strength,

and fills them with speechless horror! The despised and insulted Saviour—the bleeding, dying Lamb, whose sacrifice they mocked, and whose love they rejected—is now their angry Judge. Gladly would they avoid the sight, yet look they must on Him whom once they pierced. Gladly would they flee from His presence, but His eye of awful brightness is on them wherever they go, blazing into their souls, and rendering them powerless and hopeless. And now the voice, which once cried, in mercy's sweetest accents, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," falls on their ears, in the thunder-tones of justice, pronouncing the decree, never to be revoked, which consigns them to everlasting punishment. They depart—a shrieking throng—borne away by blaspheming devils to the prison-house of despair.

Follow them, my soul, to that dire abode, and survey the torments of hell. O what misery is theirs! They have lost the favor of God; and who can measure the depth of that loss? How bitter is it to the children of God in this world, to endure the brief withdrawals of His countenance! What mournful complaints and entreaties have such moments of desertion wrung from them! But what is this, compared with everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power? It is this dreadful sense

of expulsion, which forms one of the most fearful ingredients in the anguish of the lost. Though wicked men care not for God's presence here, yet they shall feel to their cost what it is to want His presence hereafter. And along with the loss of God, they have lost all else, except suffering, and the capacity for suffering. On every side, one black horizon of wretchedness, in which gleams no star of hope, shuts them in. Above them, sits the enthroned Lamb, whose melting compassions have become to them consuming wrath. Beneath, is the abyss of fire, yawning to receive them. On their right hand, are the blessed saints, triumphing in the execution of Divine justice, and entering into their Master's joy. On their left hand, stands that malicious Tempter, who drew them into sin, and who is now as ready to draw them into hell, there to torment them with himself for ever. Behind them, are the vanished pleasures of earth, and the abominations of a wicked life—before them, an eternity of woe—within them, the gnawing worm that never dies—without them, old companions in sin roaring under torture; legions of devils blaspheming God, and scourging their fellow-prisoners; their beloved idol, the world, all in a flame; and themselves weltering in the unquenchable fires of perdition. O my soul, gaze on this dismal scene, and let the contemplation of

it inspire thee with fresh resolve to shun the way to hell, and walk the way to heaven.

From these dreary realms of the damned, mount up in thought to the celestial home of the redeemed. The glorious Bridegroom has received His ransomed Spouse into the banqueting-house of eternal joy. O the transporting raptures of that blessed meeting! Heaven echoes with the alleluias of the saved. Sorrow and sighing are fled away. Sin and sickness shall be known no more. Satan with his fiery darts, and wicked men with their persecuting rage, shall never invade that blissful abode. There shall be no more complaints of weak and decrepid bodies; of ignorant and feeble minds; of cold and dead affections; of unbelieving and distracted hearts. No cheek shall there be sullied with a tear, for God shall wipe all tears from all faces. There shall no sigh or groan ever be heard, but voices of unceasing gladness, and hymns of triumphant praise. God, the Fountain of all blessedness, shall dwell among them, and be their God. O how entrancing is a sight of God even here! What, then, will it be above, where it is immediate, constant, full? There will be no need of ordinances to bring Him to view. He Himself will be the object of near and direct vision. It is sweet to behold Him now in His word, in His worship, and in His works; but it will be in-

finitely sweeter then to gaze on His glory without an intervening medium. We see now, at best, but through a glass darkly; then we shall see face to face. And while the vision of God, and communion with Him, will thus constitute the chief source of heavenly happiness, every thing else will contribute to swell its overflowing stream. There my soul shall be filled with all perfections, and grace shall be complete. My mind shall expand into angelic dimensions. My will shall be wholly conformed to the Divine will. My affections shall be fixed on the Lord my God, with unbroken constancy, and with fullness of delight. My body shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, being fashioned like the glorious body of the Redeemer, "according to the working whereby He is able to subdue even all things unto Himself." And thus shall my whole nature be perfectly fitted for the employments of heaven, and the enjoyment of God. There, too, shall I be surrounded by pure and glorified ones. There shall I converse with angels and archangels. There shall I associate with patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs. There shall I see the Christian friends whom I have known and loved on earth. O what a blessed reunion! There we shall meet to part no more, agree and fall out no more, rejoice together and be sad no more. O happy day! O

delightful close of all grief, and consummation of all joy! Let the hope of its near approach cheer thee, my faint and struggling soul, amidst the labors and sorrows of thy pilgrimage below.

Once more, my soul, fix thy thoughts upon eternity. How canst thou forget it? What is this narrow point of time in comparison with the endless ages of the life to come? Alas, poor mortals act a part for a while on this little stage, and then depart into another world, where they must dwell forever. And yet the life that now is, though brief and insignificant in itself, is the seed-plot of eternity; the preparatory season, on the improvement or misimprovement of which depends an everlasting state of weal or woe. O what wretched folly is it to lose eternal happiness for the transient pleasures of earth! What should not one endure for a short moment here, to escape never ending torments! Methinks nothing is of any importance, but as it relates to eternity. It is eternity alone that gives emphasis to joy or sorrow. It is this which imparts to heaven the perfection of its triumph, and to hell the intensity of its despair. How fearful is the thought, that when the lost spirit has suffered the pangs of "the second death" for millions and millions of years, its misery is no nearer an end than when it first began! O with what utter hopelessness will it ex-

claim, as it looks around the walls of its gloomy dungeon—Here I must abide for ever! O that I might be consumed so as not to be! May I not, can I not, be at last annihilated, and become as if I had never been? Is there no termination to these tortures—no escape from these direful realms? None, none. The "great gulf," once crossed, admits no return. So, on the other hand, eternity increases and secures the bliss of the redeemed. Here I am—the happy soul may say—and here I shall be, through ceaseless duration, without the slightest fear that my raptures will ever die, or be diminished. My state is better than that of Adam in the earthly, or that of the fallen angels when in the heavenly Paradise. These joys I shall never lose. O what a permanent reward have I for the brief sacrifices and conflicts of time! My sorrow is gone—my joy remains. How comes it to pass, that those light afflictions, which were but for a moment, have wrought out for me this exceeding and eternal weight of glory? I have not earned it—I have not deserved it. No, no; it was my Father's good pleasure to give me the kingdom. Eternal life is the gift of His sovereign grace alone, through the blood and righteousness of his only begotten Son. O who would not do and endure all things for this eternity of blessedness!

Thus meditate, solemnly, earnestly, prayerfully,

on these stupendous thoughts, until they become the cherished companions of your daily walks, and of your nightly musings; until they breathe their own power over your spirit, grow into your very heart, and are ever with you, at home and abroad, in public and in solitude, in labor and in rest, as your shield against temptation, your incentive to holiness, your comfort in affliction, your triumph in death.

CHAPTER IV.

OCCASIONAL MEDITATIONS.

In connection with the great and solemn truths, presented in the last chapter, as general subjects of meditation, I will now briefly refer to some of those incidental occasions of pious thought, from which, if you possess a right frame of mind, you may derive much spiritual profit. It is alike the duty and the interest of a Christian, to improve all the events and circumstances of his earthly course, for the increase of his heavenly treasure. Every condition through which he passes—every scene in which he mingles—his occupations, his associates, his successes, and his disappointments—all have a moulding influence upon him, and are shaping his character for good or for evil. Each vicissitude of his temporal being conveys to him some lesson, and impresses on him some mark. And it should be his constant endeavor so to regard and to use these common things, as to give them a sanctifying tendency, and draw from them assistance in his religious progress. Let such be your own practice. Take God with you into all your affairs.

View every step of your daily life with reference to Him, and the welfare of the soul. Thus will even ordinary employments and incidents be suggestive to you of spiritual reflections, and minister to your immortal good.

When you wake in the morning, let such thoughts as these impress your mind. How merciful is the Lord, who has guarded me in my unconscious hours! He has raised this frail body from natural slumber; and He can raise it as easily, and will raise it, from the slumber of the sepulchre at the last day. Sleep is the image of death. If I die in Jesus, death will be to me but a sleep—the grave my secure and peaceful bed—the resurrection my bright and joyful awakening. O that ever now, when I awake, I may be still with God! Then, at my final awakening, I shall behold His face in righteousness, rejoice in His presence, and bear His image. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

When you have been favored with calm and refreshing rest, think; Blessed be the keeper of Israel, that neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord only makes me dwell in safety. "For so He giveth His beloved sleep." But if natural rest be so reviving, O what is it to be received into the arms of Christ, and to repose on His bosom! What are the enjoyments of those souls that

walk all the day in the light of His countenance, and sleep all the night of affliction upon the lap of His love! Jesus! I come to Thee. My physical energies, wasted by toil, have been repaired and invigorated under Thy protecting eye. But my spirit is worn with the tossings of the world, pressed down by the burden of its corruptions, and wearied in the life-long struggle with sin and temptation. O give rest to my soul! Pillow it on Thy heart; and thence let it draw fresh strength for the toils and conflicts which may yet lie before it.

When you are putting on your apparel, think: These garments, with which a kind Providence has supplied me, cover my limbs, and shield them from the scorching heat of summer, and the chilling blasts of winter. And shall my soul be naked? Shall it dare to meet the searching glance of God, and the keen inquisition of His holy law, arrayed only in its own deformity and pollution? And shall it stand at last, thus unsheltered and exposed, before the awful tribunal of Divine Justice, and amidst the revelations of the great day? O Saviour! clothe me with Thy spotless righteousness; invest me, through faith in Thee, with the perfect merits of Thy obedience and death; create in me a clean heart, and endue me with the purity of a renewed and sanctified spirit. Then shall I appear

with acceptance in the presence of the omniscient and all holy One, and be prepared to enter into the kingdom of His glory.

When you look out on the morning sky, bright with its early splendors, thus think: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Blessed be God who hath set this luminary in the heavens, and caused the day-spring to know its place, and the sun to come forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. What a dark dungeon, and confused chaos, would this world be without it! But O how much brighter and sweeter is the light of the glorious Gospel! This shows us the path of present duty, and guides us to the mansions of eternal joy; and were its beams withdrawn, we should grope in the darkness of ignorance here, and plunge into the utter darkness of despair hereafter. O Sun of Righteousness! shine into my heart; dispel the earthly mists which hang over it; warm its affections; ripen within it the fruits of holiness; and lead me, by Thy holy radiance, through all the gloom of time, to the realms of everlasting day.

When you pray in your chamber, think: Now my Father in heaven sees me in secret. Neither darkness nor privacy can hide from Him. He scans every thought of my mind, and every imagi-

nation of my heart. O for an upright frame of spirit! O that my heart may be seasoned for God all this day! He that searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, will have His eye on me wherever I go, and whatever I do. O for grace to set Him before my sight, in all places, in all companies, and in all occupations.

When you meet the different members of your family, think: How sadly and suddenly a breach might have been made in this domestic circle! We are all alive—that is a rich mercy. We are all in health—that is more. We are all together—so God will gather His saints together. How many of this family shall be of that number! Lord, grant that none here may be among the rejected and the lost, in the day when Thou makest up Thy jewels. O may we all meet around Thy throne at last—a family in heaven.

When you are about to read the Scriptures and pray in your family, think: O what a mercy it is that I may read this blessed book! Lord, "open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." What an infinite, glorious, and gracious God is this, to whom I am to pray! How loving and faithful is that all-prevailing Advocate, who intercedes for me above! What a privilege is it to draw near, through His merits, to a Father's feet, and lay before Him all

my own wants, the temporal and spiritual welfare of those immediately connected with me, and the sins and miseries of the world in which I dwell! O for a suitable frame of heart! Lord, let my prayer be acceptable in thy sight, and make it an instrument of blessing to the dear ones who bow with me around Thy mercy-seat!

When you go forth to your customary avocations, think: The world is full of snares and temptations, and my heart as full of sin and treachery. Little, ah! little do I know what corruptions may break out from me, or what afflictions may break in upon me, before my return. The least occasion of sin may seduce me—the least accident may overthrow me. O may the Lord bless and preserve my going out and my coming in, from this time forth and for evermore.

When you are on a journey, think: My life is a journey. I am in constant motion towards eternity. Each moment brings me another step, each day another stage, nearer to the goal. Heaven is the home at which I hope to arrive. I cannot reach it without diligent exertion, heedful care, and the aid of Almighty grace. Lord, let me not miss my way, or miscarry in the end. Lead me by Thy hand, support me by Thy Spirit, keep me from fainting, refresh me with constant tokens of

Thy love, and bring me to the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul.

When you see around you the products of nature or of art, think: What a vast world is this! And yet what is this to the heavens! And what are both to the infinite God! What multitudes of people are there in this city; how great its wealth, how splendid and costly its buildings! But what are these throngs to the "multitude which no man can number," that shall inhabit the city of my God? What are these riches to "the walls of sapphire, and the streets paved with gold?" What are these marble structures to the palaces of the New Jerusalem? How lovely is this landscape, with its green woods and fields, and winding streams, and quiet cottages! And yet how rugged and cheerless is it, compared with the Paradise above, where grows the tree of Life fast by the river of God; where the sun never sets, and comes no chilling winter; and where amaranthine flowers cover all the celestial plains with their unfading beauty! How cold and hard looks yonder rock—how bleak and sterile yonder mountain! O my soul, are not these types of thine own state? Look about thee: gather instruction from all thou seest—lessons to encourage, to quicken, or to warn thee.

When you are conversing with others, think: For every idle word I must give an account, and "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." O my soul, think before thou speak. Will what thou art saying be to the glory of God, and the edification of men? Speak as thou wouldst speak if Jesus Christ were standing by thee in a visible form. Speak as thou wouldst desire to speak at death, and as thou hopest to speak in heaven.

When you are alone, think: I am in the presence of the omniscient God. These are precious hours that go over my head. Why should I squander my time and my thought on trifles? O my soul, thou hast a noble faculty of reflection! Call home thy truant imaginations. Busy thyself with thy own condition, wants, dangers, and hopes. Converse with God and with thyself, and thou wilt never be less alone than when alone.

When you partake of your daily food, think: How beneficial to us are the creatures when living, and how serviceable when dead! They accomplish the end of their creation and appointment. O my soul, sit thou as queen-regent over thy sensual appetite! Take heed of excess. Put a knife to the throat of intemperate desires. Be not brutish in a sinful abuse of these creature comforts, but saint-like in a sanctified use of them; and look to

God for His blessing, else these dead things cannot preserve life.

When you rise up well refreshed, think: If the creatures be so nourishing and supporting, what must be the Creator? O the sweetness of the blessed feast of fat things in the Gospel! O the delicacy of the wine in my Father's kingdom! And shall I abuse the gifts of God, forget the Giver, and rise up to play? Many, better than I, want these refreshments. O for a thankful heart! What a bountiful Master do I serve! What a great Housekeeper is the Lord, who provides for so numerous a family in heaven and earth!

When you go to the place of public worship, think: O how glad am I when people say, Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord! What a mercy is the Sabbath, the sweet day of rest from worldly toil and care, and of hallowed intercourse with God! How rich are the benefits connected with Christian institutions! It is a lovely spectacle to see people of every class and condition, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, childhood in its joy, youth in its bloom, manhood in its strength, and old age with its silvery head—all flocking to the sacred spot, where the message of salvation is proclaimed, and the voice of prayer and praise goes up to the throne above. Lord, grant that many souls may be led this day, by the

convincing power of Thy Spirit, to obey the truth and live. And O give me a heart prepared to receive the communications of Thy grace, and to profit by them; for this may be the last opportunity allotted me on earth.

When you listen to the dispensation of the word, think: The preacher comes as an ambassador from God to me. It is God that speaks—the great Jehovah, who commands attendance and audience, and who can command my soul into never ending torments. The words, which now fall on my ears, are words of everlasting life, and are intimately connected with my highest good, here and hereafter. O let me not slight them, but with all the faculties of my soul give heed to their teachings. My eternal state may depend on the manner in which I receive this one message. Life and death are now before me.

When you are to partake of the Lord's Supper, think: I am this day to sup with Christ, and have I on a wedding garment? Have I an interest in that atoning Redeemer, who is at once the Maker and the Substance of this blessed feast? O my soul, dost thou rightly discern the Lord's body? Rouse up thy faith and love, thy hope and desire. Draw near to these emblems of the crucified One, and receive them with lowly contrition, with grateful trust, and with entire dedication to Him. His

flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. O Saviour! be Thou present at Thine own table, and fill my famishing spirit with the joy of Thy salvation.

When you retire from public worship, think: Another season of religious service and instruction has now closed; but my work is not yet done. I must now meditate on the truths which I have heard, and inquire what influence they have had upon me; what light they have imparted to my understanding; what conviction to my will, what impulse to my affections. O let me look well to it, that the word, through my misimprovement of it, do not become to me "a savor of death unto death!" The privileges of this day have brought me one step nearer to heaven or to hell. Each time I tread the Lord's courts—each sermon I hear—will tend to increase my joy, or to aggravate my condemnation, in a future world. I must get more good, become more good, and do more good, as the effect of every gracious opportunity, or all these abundant means of spiritual culture will render me inexcusable, and plunge me into tenfold misery.

When you meet with attached relatives and acquaintance, think: If it be so sweet to meet with friends, dear and long tried, how much sweeter must it be to meet with God, my best

beloved, and most loving Friend! God is a Friend nearer and dearer than any earthly object of affection can be. May He give me grace so to improve the society of the friends with whom His kindness has surrounded me, that I shall both receive good from them, and impart good to them. And when you separate from those you love, reflect, that now you separate in the hope of meeting again; but that soon you must part to meet no more on earth; and let it be your fervent prayer, that you may all meet in heaven at the resurrection of the just.

When you are busy in your particular calling, think: Who sets me a work? Is it not God? For whom do I work? Is it not for Him? Do I seek merely my own temporal advantage? Then I am carnal. O let me be moderate in the pursuit of this world, nor suffer its cares to overwhelm me. While I am "diligent in business," let me be also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Let it be my constant and most earnest endeavor to abide with God in my calling, and so to regulate and control all my worldly engagements, that nothing shall interpose between me and the enjoyment of His presence, or hinder the worship and obedience which I owe Him. In reference, also, to the nature of your calling, reflect thus: Am I a magistrate? I judge, not for man, but for God, who

will judge the unrighteous judge, and to whom I must answer for the manner in which I discharge the civil trust, which His providence has committed to me. Am I a minister? Upon me rests the charge of souls, for whose spiritual welfare I must study, and labor, and pray. O what account shall I give? Am I a merchant, tradesman, mechanic, husbandman? Whatever be the character of my occupation in life, I am bound to derive from it moral instruction, and to conduct it in accordance with the will of God, and the interests of my soul.

When you consider your relative connections, think: Am I a husband? I must dwell with my wife "according to knowledge"—in harmony with the holy principles which the Gospel inculcates—with Christian affection, sympathy, and forbearance—that our mutual prayers may not be hindered. Am I a wife? I must be a help to my husband in all things; ministering to his happiness; sharing his sorrows; encouraging him in the service of God, if he be a believer; and seeking to win him to Christ by my "chaste conversation," if he be yet in impenitence and sin. Am I a father? I must not provoke, but profit my child, and labor to train it up for God, by pious counsel, example, and guidance. Am I a mother? O let me remember that to me God has assigned

the office of directing the first movements of the infant minds which He has entrusted to my care; and that the influence, which I exert upon them, will most probably determine their character in this world, and their destiny in the next. Am I a child? I must yield all reverence and obedience to my parents, as unto God, in whose stead they are. Am I a master? My Master in heaven, who is no respecter of person, sees and marks my conduct towards those who are under my authority. Am I a servant? It behoves me to discharge the duties of my station with diligence, fidelity, and suitable submission, even as Christ, whom I serve, hath left me an example, that I should follow in His steps.

When you hear any good news, let it remind you of the glad tidings of the gospel; the glorious announcement from heaven of glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men: a message the best and sweetest that angel ever brought, or man received. And when intelligence of a painful character reaches you, yield not to its depressing influence, but let your language be: If God is my defence and salvation, I am fortified against every disaster. "The righteous shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Let the kingdom of Christ be advanced—let error and sin be de-

stroyed—and I am satisfied, whatever else may occur.

When you witness or read of any remarkable judgments from God's hand, think: "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?" O dreadful majesty of the Lord of Hosts, who made the sea and the dry land, who commands all the elements, and works His wonders in the fire, the water, the earth, and the air. "They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at Thy tokens." Lord, what mean these things? What wilt Thou do unto us? Our sins cry for vengeance. O restrain Thy hand in mercy, or hide Thy saints till Thy wrath be past.

When you behold the sinful acts of men, or hear of the commission of some startling crime, think: O what are the best of us by nature! Who makes me to differ? Free grace alone has withheld my steps, or I should now be reeling with the drunkard, blaspheming with the profane, reveling with the wanton. Lord, let me not confide in a mere abstinence from outward immoralities, but strive after inward holiness and conformity of heart to Thy requirements. My nature is corrupt and fallible. Leave me not to the hidden workings of my depravity. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let

them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

When your corruptions break out in open sin, think: O the vileness of my deceitful heart! "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Little did I think to have been thus beguiled and surprised. God is righteous, and I am weak, polluted, and vile. I have grown secure, and have forgotten His upholding hand, and He has left me to myself. O how justly might He have taken me in the act of sin, and cast me headlong into hell! Let me not, for an instant, delay to humble myself in His sight, and make my peace with Him.

When sad crosses and trials befall you in body, in estate, in reputation, or in connections, think: What is the sin for which God is now chastening me? Lord, open mine ears to hear the voice of Thy rod, and bow my heart in obedience to Thy will. O let instruction come with Thy corrections! Help me to search my heart, and to try my ways. This stroke is either a token of Thy love, or the beginning of Thy wrath. O that I may see in it a Father's heart, feel in it a Father's hand, and attain by it a Father's end!

When you are delivered from apparent danger of death by sickness or accident, consider: O my

soul, what if thou hadst now been snatched away, and thy body left a mass of loathsome corruption? Where wouldst thou have been? Wert thou ready for glory? What assurance hadst thou of a better state? Didst thou not then wish to have been in a more prepared condition? If so, let it serve as a warning to thee. Give God the glory of thy deliverance; devote thyself more entirely to Him; do at once whatever needs to be done to fit thee for meeting Him in peace; and live in constant readiness for the hour that shall summon thee to His presence.

When the shades of evening fall around you, and the sky is full of stars, think: Another day of my life is gone, and I am so much nearer to eternity. What improvement have I made of these precious hours? Have I used them to the glory of God? Am I more ripe for heaven now than when the morning dawned? O Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me. I walk through a dark night of error, perplexity, and trial. Show me the path of life. Let the blessed day-star arise in my heart. When, O when shall my soul be translated above yonder twinkling stars, to shine in the celestial firmament for ever and ever! And when you lay aside your garments and seek your wonted repose, meditate thus: Even so must thou, my soul, put off the body at death,

and be unclothed that thou mayst "be clothed upon with thy house which is from heaven," and "that mortality may be swallowed up of life." O, then, daily undress thee of corruption and sin; give up thyself into the hands of Christ; and lay thyself asleep beneath His loving eye, as thou wouldst wish to be found at death, or on the morning of the resurrection.

These, and similar seasons and occurrences, are well suited to call forth devout reflections, and to promote a spiritual frame of mind. Let me urge upon you the importance of so improving them. Give to every action and event of your life a religious character and aspect. Contemplate whatever pertains to you, and whatever surrounds you, in the light of the Gospel, and in its bearing on eternity. Thus matters, in themselves merely secular, cast into the alembic of faith and prayer, will produce the pure gold of soul-enriching wisdom and piety.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW MEDITATION PRESERVES AND INCREASES HEART-TREASURE.

EVERY intelligent observer, who has given any thoughtful heed to his own religious history, or to that of others, must be aware that the great majority of professing Christians, at the present day, attach far less importance to meditation, both as a means of grace and as a required duty, than is demanded by the position assigned to it in the Bible, and by the effects which it is calculated to produce. Multitudes, who are regular in their attendance on the public ministrations of the Gospel, who observe the stated seasons of social prayer, and who do not altogether neglect secret devotion and the private study of Scripture, are yet well nigh strangers to the habit of solemn and deliberate reflection on the import of what they read or hear, and on its application to their own spiritual state. It is, therefore, desirable to set forth, more distinctly than might otherwise be necessary, the claims of meditation as a divine precept, and the purifying and

elevating influence which it exerts on those who rightly practice it.

1. Meditation is clearly enjoined by divine authority. When the people of Israel were about to pass into Canaan, their almighty Leader and Protector, knowing the proneness of their hearts to forget His statutes, and the necessity of careful consideration to preserve them from apostacy, gave them the following charge by the lips of His servant Joshua; "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." In the Proverbs of Solomon it is said, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments." "Incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding." Should it be affirmed that these requirements belonged to a former dispensation, and are no longer binding under the freer economy of the Gospel, a sufficient answer may be found in the fact, that the New Testament itself contains many similar injunctions. Thus the apostle Paul exhorts the Colossians, "Set your affection on things above." "Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom." And to the same effect is his instruction to Timo-

thy. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." And what is thus expressly inculcated in numerous passages, is no less plainly implied in all the practical announcements of Scripture. The exercise of devout meditation has, therefore, a firm basis in the revealed will of God. The same supreme and holy One, who commands us to repent, to believe, to pray, to hear and read His word, commands us also to consider, to think, to ponder His ways and our own, and so to reflect upon all the manifestations of His providence and of His grace, as to derive from them the teachings which He mercifully designs to impart. Accordingly, we find that all the holy men, whose lives are recorded in sacred history, were distinguished for the practice of this duty. Enoch and Noah "walked with God." Abraham and Job lived much in holy contemplation on divine things. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide." Moses was accustomed often to withdraw from the noise and bustle of the congregation, for the purpose of retired thought and solitary converse with God. David, though a king, and encompassed by the anxieties and labors of public affairs, found time to engage frequently in the delightful employment of meditating on the word and works of Jehovah. And not seldom did our Lord leave the society

even of His beloved disciples, and retire to some sequestered spot, that He might spend hours in silent communion with Himself and with His Father in heaven. Shall we, then, neglect a duty so clearly taught in the word of God, and so abundantly enforced by the practice of the pious in all past ages, and by the example of Christ Himself? How strange it is, that many who recognize the obligation of other duties, seem almost entirely to overlook the binding nature of this, and live in habitual disregard of it, with scarcely a consciousness of guilt!

2. But not only is the habit of religious meditation a matter of scriptural precept and example; it is also a source of the highest improvement to those who form and maintain it. It is the chief agent in fastening divine truths on the mind. The knowledge of these truths we receive by hearing, reading, and the social interchange of pious thought; but it is meditation alone that gives them a permanent dwelling place in our memories, and makes them our own. It is the digestive process, by which spiritual food nourishes the soul, and promotes its growth in holiness. The want of this is the grand reason why such numbers of professing Christians, notwithstanding the most ample teaching, still remain ignorant, unstable, and unfruitful; "ever learning, but never able to come

to the knowledge of the truth." Instruction flows in upon them from all sides; but their heads and hearts are like sieves, out of which every thing runs as fast as it is poured in. The impressions which truth makes on their minds, are as evanescent as characters traced on the sands of the sea-shore, which the next wave effaces forever. But meditation imprints truth deeply on the conscience, and engraves it on the tablets of "the inner man," "as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond." It thus becomes incorporated into the soul; forms, as it were, a part of it; and is ever present with it, to regulate its affections, and to control and guide all its movements.

3. Meditation tends to strengthen and increase all the Christian graces. Gifts are promoted by verbal, but grace by mental exercises. As food and air greatly influence the state of the body, so the soul is gradually assimilated to the nature of the subjects with which it is frequently brought in contact. The more it feeds on spiritual aliment, and inhales a spiritual atmosphere, the more spiritual it becomes, and the more are the holy principles, which the Divine Spirit has implanted within it, developed and expanded. The more we reflect on the evil of sin, and on the infinite sacrifice which was required for its expiation, the deeper will be our sorrow for it, and the more cordial our

denunciation of it. The more we think of Christ, of the depth of His compassion, of the fullness of His offices, of the all-sufficiency of His righteousness, the stronger will be our faith in Him, the warmer our love to Him, the more entire our consecration to His cause. By dwelling often and earnestly on the character and dispensations of God, we shall be led to cherish a more influential fear of Him, and a more fervent desire to please Him in all holy obedience. In like manner frequent thoughts of heaven will invigorate our hope of its enjoyment, enable us to look forward to it with more eager longings of soul, and prepare us to regard all our present trials as so many steps in our progress to eternal felicity. Thus holy thinking excites holy feeling. While we muse, the fire of heavenly affection kindles and burns, and fills the whole heart with its seraphic glow.

4. This exercise of the mind is one of the best safeguards against the assaults of outward temptation, and the force of inward corruption. Pious thoughts are as cold water to quench the fiery darts of Satan. They serve as a precious antidote against the seductive allurements of the world; for they furnish the soul with better employment than the pursuit of dreams and shadows. The most effectual way to silence the thousand voices that are constantly calling us into the treacherous

paths of earthliness, is to mind heavenly things. The soul that converses habitually with eternal realities, is elevated above the low entanglements and the paltry attractions of sense. As the eagle, while soaring aloft in the noon-day sky, cannot be caught by a net spread upon the ground; so the heart, when lifted up by meditation amidst the glories of the celestial world, is most secure from the snares which lurk in this terrestrial sphere. Equally powerful is such a frame of mind to resist the workings of internal depravity. The more we contemplate the Divine law, the holiness of God, and the discoveries which He has made in His word of the natural character of man,—the more distinctly do we perceive the heinousness of transgression, and the more earnestly do we strive to avoid it. Under such a training, we become better acquainted with the latent pollution and deceitfulness of our own hearts, and more watchful and prepared against their insidious risings. To an eye, purified by the enlightening Spirit, and strengthened by long gazing on the Sun of Righteousness, sin can assume no disguise, and make its approaches by no stratagem, which it will not readily detect. Thus meditation on the statutes of God qualifies us to discover, and, by His help, to foil every enemy within us that would oppose His rightful authority.

5. A habit of devout thinking is of great assist-

ance to the believer in his seasons of spiritual depression. When David was oppressed with doubts, and deprived of the sensible manifestation of God's presence, he was able to argue down his desponding feelings, by reflecting on the loving kindness and faithfulness of the Lord. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." "The Lord will command His loving kindness in the day time, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." So will it be with every Christian whose soul is enriched by heavenly meditation. His stock of enlivening thoughts will counteract disheartening ones. Encouragements, drawn from the promises of God, and nourished by a familiar acquaintance with the methods of His grace, will repel the darkest suggestions of unbelief, and allay the severest mental disquietude. "Unless Thy law had been my delights," said the Psalmist, in the review of his past conflicts, "I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget Thy precepts; for with them Thou hast quickened me." Thus the soul, wrapped in holy thoughts, can pass through the sharpest and gloomiest struggles, safe from all fatal wounds.

Meditation is an essential preparative for re-

ligious duties, and a most efficient aid in their performance. Whether the work before us be prayer, praise, the reading of Scripture, or listening to the proclamation of the Gospel, there is nothing which so fits us to enter upon it, and so helps us in it, as a devoutly meditative spirit. David, indeed, joins prayer and meditation together. "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation." Meditation composes the mind, warms and elevates the heart, abstracts it from worldly things, and attunes it to the hallowed exercises of devotion. Meditation is, in fact, a large part of a Christian's devotion, and such a part of it, that when he is precluded from public ordinances, or from the social gatherings of his brethren, his soul may still sally out to its God on the wings of holy thoughts, and hold communion with Him in the presence of the most bitter adversaries, in the solitude of a desert, or on the lonely sea, far away from the sanctuaries of the land. No barriers and no distance can hinder his access to God in sacred contemplation. In this manner, also, he is enabled to carry on his intercourse with God in times and in situations, which render more formal acts of worship impracticable. When walking or riding by the way—when engaged in secular occupations—aye, when shut up in prison, debarred from all converse with Christian friends, and deprived of

all means of communication with the outer world,—his mind may still be busy in heavenly musings. These may be his companions wherever he is. Though he can do nothing else, he can think of God, of Christ, and of heaven; and thus employ even the smallest fragments of time, and the most unpropitious circumstances, in adding to his spiritual treasure.

7. Holy thoughts adapt and incite the mind to holy effort, and make it ready for every good word and work. He who has his thoughts best employed when alone, will best use his tongue when in company. If you meet such a one in the scenes of business, on a journey, in the walks of social life, on any occasion whatever, the fountain of pious thought in his heart will send forth a stream of pious discourse from his lips, to edify and refresh believers, and to convince and persuade the impenitent. And in every other form of exertion for the spiritual good of men, he who meditates most, will be most active, energetic, and self-sacrificing. Why is it that the great mass of those, who avow themselves the disciples of Christ, devote so little of their time and property to the advancement of His kingdom, and the conversion of the world? One principal cause of this deplorable fact doubtless is, that they think so little on these subjects. Though the claims of the Saviour, and

the wants of the perishing multitudes around them, are often pressed on their attention, yet, absorbed in the pursuit of their own temporal interests, they do not give them sufficient heed, to awaken a spirit of benevolence, and call forth strenuous endeavor. But very different is it with the man who is accustomed to religious meditation. To him the spread of true religion on earth is a cherished and engrossing theme. He reflects much and deeply on his obligations to the Saviour. He ponders the command, given by Christ to His apostles, and through them to the whole body of His people in every age, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." He looks out over the wide circumference of the globe, and observes how vast a portion of its surface is yet unvisited by the light of the Gospel, and covered with the baleful shadow of idolatry; how the lands of paganism are full of the most revolting pollution, and overspread with misery and despair; and how even in nominally Christian lands immense multitudes are still without any experimental knowledge of the Redeemer, and of the renewing work of His Spirit. He unfolds the scroll of prophecy, and reads the promise, that Christ shall have "the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession;" that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,

as the waters cover the sea;" and that all the myriads of our apostate race shall become the subjects of the Prince of Peace. He compares these predictions with the developments of Divine Providence, and carefully watches all those movements in the social, intellectual, and moral world, which, under the directing hand of God, are ever tending onward to the grand and glorious consummation, when the reign of truth and righteousness shall be universally established. Familiar with subjects like these, and animated by their influence, he throws his entire energies into the work which his Master has assigned him; devotes himself sacredly to it; and puts forth his all of soul, and mind, and substance, to promote the triumphs of Jesus in the salvation of sinners.

8. Heavenly meditation is the noblest exercise of our rational faculties, and tends directly to prepare us for the employments of the redeemed above. The soul is of celestial birth; and though now debased by sin, and chained to earth by the low and sordid appetites which depravity has engendered in it; yet, when emancipated and purified by the grace of God, it reasserts its divine original, and soars upward to the Source from which it sprung. To occupy it with carnal thoughts—to bound its vision by the limits of this ignoble sphere—is to degrade its lofty extraction, to crip-

ple its powers, clog its wings, and keep it back from its ethereal flight. No earthly object is sufficiently large to fill its capacities, sufficiently perfect to satisfy its desires. Eternal things alone are durable enough to be its portion, rich enough to supply its wants, and vast enough to afford scope for its endless expatiations. These alone are suited to its nature, and adequate to all the necessities of its being. And these alone furnish it with topics of reflection worthy to interest and to engross it. Compared with these, all the splendor and glory of the world deserve not one glance of the eye, or one thought of the mind. Whatever relates not to the soul, and contributes not to its immortal happiness, is unsuited to its love, and beneath its regard. "We look," says an apostle, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." And while meditation on eternal realities is thus the fittest employment of the soul here, it is likewise eminently calculated to qualify it for the yet higher occupations which await it in a future state. It is the soul's walk and communion with God—its excursions into Paradise—the foretaste and anticipation of glory—the life of heaven begun below. The man who maintains a habit of holy thought, breathes a

celestial atmosphere. The scenes and influences of eternity are brought down by faith into his daily path. Wherever he is, he feels that Jehovah is constantly at his side, as his Friend and Companion, so that he can say with the Psalmist, "When I awake I am still with Thee." Thus is he fitted, by converse with heaven now, to share its blessedness hereafter, and become "a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." The whole frame of his mind, the whole tone of his spirit, is allied to heaven, and in harmony with it. His thoughts are there, his heart is there, his treasure is there; and he needs only to step across the narrow stream of death, to be there himself, and enter fully upon its blissful avocations. O happy is he whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find thus prepared! To such a one the passage from earth to heaven is not a sudden transition—not a violent breaking up of long cherished feelings, and habits, and pursuits, and pleasures, and the entrance into a world where all is new and strange; but the easy and natural merging of an immature state into one the same in kind but perfect in degree; the expansion of the bud into the flower, of the seed into the harvest; the immediate sight and fruition of glories, already known and familiar to the view of faith. He changes his place, but not his company. Earth

is no longer his abode; but he carries with him, to his everlasting home, the thoughts, and emotions, and graces, which constituted his true solace in his pilgrimage below, developed, consummated, made perpetual, and purified from all the corrupt mixtures which marred and weakened them here. O happy frame! O blessed state of expectation and meetness for the glorious society on high! Who would not desire it? And who, desiring it, will not labor sedulously to obtain it?

Thus, in these several ways, does meditation contribute to preserve and augment the treasure of grace in our hearts. Let me, then, exhort you solemnly to the practice of this duty. It is essential to the permanence and growth of your piety. Amidst the busy scenes of the world, the pressure of its engagements, its bustle and turmoil, its distractions and its solicitations, you cannot retain the teachings of divine truth, or cultivate spiritual affections, without accustoming yourself to frequent and serious reflection on the great concerns which belong to your everlasting welfare. O may God fasten this subject on your mind! May He elevate your thoughts to heavenly things, bring them home with power to your heart, write them on every lineament of your soul, and so keep alive the impression of them, that it shall never depart from you, till you enter into that bright world

where you shall behold them in their unveiled lustre and greatness! Unite with me in the prayer of David, and make it ever your own. "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RULES FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF THIS TREASURE.

One more general division of my subject remains to be considered, namely, In what manner a good man is to bring forth good things out of the good treasure of his heart. In an earlier part of this treatise, it has been largely insisted on that a Christian is to employ his treasure in the great duties of meditation, religious discourse, holy action, and patient suffering. Referring the reader to what was then said, I shall only add some suggestions relative to the mode of using this treasure in the above mentioned duties.

1. A Christian's treasure should be drawn out speedily. Spiritual riches are to be used as soon as acquired. Things new are to be brought forth as well as things old; those lately obtained, as well as those long since hoarded. Many good thoughts and impressions are lost for the want of immediate use, as many souls are undone by neglect and delay. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." That is, he lets it lie by and spoil on his hands. He takes pains

to hunt for it, but will not take pains to roast it. O how many such sluggards are there in spiritual things! How many will travel far to hear a sermon, and be affected under it, and yet lose all before they get home, because they do not follow it home. Many hunt after the means of grace, and are very diligent in attending ordinances, but, alas, make little improvement of them to their present advantage. Their hearts are full of desires before they enter the house of God, and of delight while they continue under the dispensation of His word; but, in a little time, the truths which they hear grow stale, and by degrees fade away from their minds, from the want of being promptly applied. The Jews were not to keep the manna which they had gathered until the morrow; and if they did so, it became worthless. Thus the hearers of the gospel are not so to lay it up as to neglect its present use; for, in that case, it will fail to produce any salutary effect. Many an important idea has been lost from the want of being rubbed up by subsequent reflection; and many a powerful conviction of sin and duty dies, because it is not at once acted on. When blossoms are knit, though their first freshness is gone, yet they are more secure from injury by frosts and winds than before. In like manner, good impressions, when quickly carried out into action, become, as

it were, knit, and acquire a settled consistency and permanence of character. O Christian! your work is not done when the public duties of the sanctuary are over. You must now, like the Bereans, having "received the word with all readiness of mind," search the Scriptures to ascertain both the truth of what you have heard, and its adaptation to your own case. When a man receives a pair of gloves or shoes, he first tries them on to see how they fit him, and then uses them afterwards as he has occasion. And will you not honor the word of God as much as you do a bodily garment? David could do nothing with the armor which he had not proved; nor can you derive any benefit from the word preached, until you become assured of its suitableness to your own circumstances. You must first prove truth, then approve and improve it. And you must take the earliest opportunity to do this, lest delay wear out the effect produced, and you hear and believe in vain. Thus our Lord, in the Parable of the Sower, compares the Gospel, when received without careful attention and reflection, to seed sown among thorns. "He that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." And of the same purport is the exhortation of the apostle

James. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." The right employment of truth involves its apprehension by the mind, its deposition and retention in the memory, and its reproduction in the life. As a man takes a shaft in his hand, puts it into his quiver, retains it there for a season, and, when he has occasion for its use, draws it out again; so must you do with the arrows which you obtain from the celestial armory. The design of your laying up is that you may lay out. Be careful, however, that you do not suffer your leaky hearts to let slip what you hear; but grasp it firmly, treasure it securely, and then expend it readily and wisely, for your own good, and that of others. The best preservative of truth is the prompt improvement of it. Speedy exercise helps to spiritual dexterity. Mere theory will never make an artist; a few hours of practice will teach him more than many days of inactive speculation. Give yourself at once, then, to the practical application and carrying out of whatever religious instruction has been imparted to you. Let your deeds manifest what the words of the Psalmist declare. "This

I had because I kept thy precepts." So, in all future duties and conflicts, let your conduct and your success say: This I had from God in such an interview; this help I obtained from Him in such an ordinance; this strength I received from such a spiritual repast, the sweet savor and virtue of which linger with me still. O of what inestimable service will this be to you! It will encourage and stimulate you in similar performances, and accustom you to this delightful commerce of drawing all from God, and expending all for God. Make speedy use, therefore, of whatever he gives you, and let your profiting appear unto all.

2. Draw out your treasure seasonably. Every thing is most beautiful and useful in its season. Though you are to lay out your spiritual gains with promptness, yet you are not to do so inopportunely. You must not be so hasty as to be premature. Let your summer fruits be also ripe grapes. A Christian must learn to adapt all his expressions to their fitting time. Circumstances greatly vary cases. That may be a duty at one time which is not so at another. Negative duties—that is, such as consists in abstaining from the violation of God's commandments—are binding at all times, and in all circumstances. Affirmative duties—those which consist in doing good to others—are also of perpetual obligation, yet their specific

fulfillment is much modified by circumstances. Admonition, for instance, is an affirmative duty; yet it is not a duty to reprove a man when he is intoxicated, or insane with passion. Here Christian prudence interposes, and directs us when reproof will be beneficial, and when it will be thrown away. Though David was full of a treasure of good thoughts, yet he knew there was a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak; and, therefore, on certain occasions, he kept his mouth as with a bridle while the wicked were before him. Our Lord Jesus, also, knew how to speak in season; and though He was full of heavenly riches, yet sometimes He answered not a word, and waived doing a good work, until He saw an opportunity for it, in which God might be more glorified, souls more advantaged, and the purposes of His grace more successfully promoted. Thus must you study when to speak and act with the greatest prospect of being useful. Certain companies may not be fit, at certain times, for holy discourses; and you must "not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment;" and a godly man "bringeth forth his fruit in its season." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," or "baskets of silver," according to a more correct render-

ing. "A word spoken with propriety, opportunely, and suitably to the occasion, is as much in its place, and as conspicuously beautiful, as the golden fruit which appears through the apertures of an exquisitely wrought silver basket." Some affirm that the Hebrew expression, which is translated, "a word fitly spoken," strictly imports, "a word on the wheels"—thus indicating that proper times and circumstances are wheels to carry words to their desired result with greater efficacy and advantage. There is a particular point of time, in which if a word or a work fall, it becomes weighty and successful; and it is for the want of this holy tact, that so many good men are so inefficient and powerless. Let thy words, therefore, as Ambrose says, "be under the yoke and balance;" that is, let them be regulated by humility, and weighed by discretion. So shall thy tongue be subject to thy mind.

In self-communion also, as well as in discourses with others, you are to bring forward truths, precepts, warnings, and promises, and press them seasonably on your own minds. These will be of incalculable value to you, to check you in sin, to cheer you in duty, to control and direct your progress. They may come in at a critical moment, to prevent some rash attempt, to rouse up your drowsy or drooping feelings, and to calm your

murmuring or troubled heart. If you but wake up your own spirit in the hour of difficulty, and call to mind your past experiences and comforts, as David did in a similar case, the Spirit of God will also bring fitting truths to your remembrance, at the very juncture when you need them most. And certainly, in those dubious workings and ambiguous debates, which often take place between the carnal and the spiritual natures within us, seasonable thoughts will assist greatly in turning the scale for God. When the balance is at a poise, a small grain will make the one side or the other preponderate. Every Christian knows well what this means. O what good has a seasonable thought done many a sinking soul! On the contrary, thoughts, which are in themselves good and true, may distract and prejudice the soul, by being ill-timed and inappropriate to its condition. When, for instance, a sincere and humble Christian is overwhelmed with spiritual despondency, and by a sense of his utter demerit—thoughts respecting the awful holiness of God, and the perfect purity of the Divine law, though just in themselves, and salutary in their season, are not the thoughts for him, because they are not suited to his state of mind. Instead of dwelling on these disquieting themes, he needs to bring strongly to his view the promises and consolations of the Gospel, the com-

pleteness of every believer in Christ, and the certainty of the justification and acceptance of all to whom His righteousness is imputed by faith. And, on the other hand, when a Christian has relapsed into religious indifference, the fullness and freeness of God's grace, and the privileges of His people, are not the subjects most necessary to his situation. He requires rather to have the solemnity of his obligations, and the sacred claims of duty urged home upon his attention, that they may awaken him to a sense of his unfaithfulness, and lead him to repentance. So when a Christian is engaged in prayer, an inclination to read or converse, so far from promoting devotional feeling, may produce only a disturbing effect on his mind. This is making religious duties interfere with each other, and thus cannot proceed from the Spirit of God, which is a Spirit of order. Even thoughts which relate to good objects, and which, in their proper connection, would be highly beneficial, may become "vain thoughts," by being out of place, and may greatly hinder us in the worship of God. Endeavor, then, to nourish pertinent thoughts, and make a seasonable use of your spiritual treasure.

3. This treasure must be used with sincerity. My meaning is, that in your exhibition of it you should beware of hypocrisy, make show of no more than you really have, and profess not to have that

to which you never attained. There are many forward professors, who talk of things which they understand not, and boast of truths, graces, comforts and experiences, which they never felt in their own hearts. Like the false prophets, who "stole the word every one from his neighbor," they glean up from others certain phrases, expressions, and observations, of whose meaning they have no experimental knowledge, but which they learn and speak by rote. They resemble those pretended scholars, who make a great parade of learning, and talk fluently about many books which they never saw; but who, on being well sounded, are found to be extremely shallow and superficial. In this particular, as in all others, there is a wide difference between a hypocrite and a real child of God. The former cares not how good he makes men believe he is. The latter is afraid lest others should think too well of him, and is jealous of creating expectations which his true character will not warrant. His heart is constantly distressed by this one thought, that he is not such as men deem him, and has not such a treasure of holiness as they attribute to him. Often does he say thus to himself; "By my discourses, prayers, and outward carriage, I have given my dear friends occasion to imagine there is more good in me than there really is. They see the better side; but

God and my conscience know that beneath this garnished surface, there is much rottenness of heart, and impurity of motive." It was this which made the martyr Bradford subscribe his name with the epithet of a very painted hypocrite. Nay, this it is which lays many a good man under a temptation, not to appear well to others, lest his measure of grace within should not bear out his professions. This is doubtless an extreme and mistaken view; yet it is a good token of sincerity, when a reputation for piety, though well founded, tends to promote humility and self-abasement. But that to which I especially urge you, is uprightness in word and deed. Let your heart and tongue be tied together. Strive rather to be good than to seem good. Approve your heart unto God, that your praise may be from Him, and not from men. Profess to be what you are, and be what you profess; and be sure to have that within you to which you outwardly pretend. Such uprightness will both evince the reality of your treasure, and serve greatly to increase it. "The upright shall have good things in possession." Alas! what will fair words and a false heart advantage you? Fine flourishes and a polluted inside will render you odious. Groundless boastings end in woful disgrace. God knows what you have, and men will know in time. "Burning lips and a wicked heart

are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." That is, professions, dictated by an insincere heart, however ardent and specious they may appear, are like a worthless vessel overlaid with tinsel. The gilded dissembler may make a fair show of seeming zeal; but his inward unsoundness shall at length be detected. "His wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation." Some men's religion is like pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the stomach; or like a man in a fever, whose face and outward parts glow with unnatural heat, while the chill of death is at his heart. O what fervent zeal do many manifest in external profession, who are either entirely destitute of a principle of grace, or, at least, want that degree of it to which they pretend. Bishop Hall, in answer to one who affirmed that "it is good to accustom the mouth to speak well, since good speech many times leads to good affections," very judiciously says, "I should fear that speaking well, without feeling, would be the readiest way to draw a man into habitual hypocrisy." Let me, then, earnestly persuade you to cultivate sincerity and simplicity of heart. A uniformly consistent life can spring only from the operation of vital piety in the soul; and if the principles and motives which guide you are upright before God, your outward walk cannot be dark and crooked in His account. "If thine

eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

4. Draw out your treasure suitably. In other words, you must not only act agreeably to what you have within, so that your layings out may not be more than your layings up; but you must produce holy expressions and actions in some degree commensurate with God's vouchsafed means and appointed ends.

Let your treasure within and your performances without correspond to your receipts and advantages. Where God lays out much, He looks for much in return. The more pains He takes, the more fruit He expects. You must not only bring forth "good fruit," but "much fruit," that you may glorify God, and benefit the souls of your fellow men. The impenitent and unregenerate manifest a prodigious contrariety to the Lord's tillage; but the godly soul should not be sterile and unproductive under His culture. Enclosed grounds should not be like the barren wilderness. God's garden should be more fruitful than the common field. Trees, which the Lord hath planted and watered, are not to be like the trees of the forest. Well tilled souls should abound in fruits of righteousness. The Church is compared in Scripture to a vineyard, and particular Christians to vines. Now, the sole value and purpose of the

vine consist in the fruit which it bears. If it be unfruitful, it is good for nothing, not even, as the prophet tells us, "to make a pin, to hang any vessel thereon." So the great end for which Christians have been redeemed and called is, that by a holy life they might display and illustrate the manifold grace of the Saviour. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." And if the professed followers of Christ fail to do this, they are utterly useless both to God and man. They have become as withered branches, which "men gather and cast into the fire, and they are burned."

Reader! art thou planted in the vineyard of the Lord? Consider the varied and ample culture which He has bestowed upon thee, and ask thyself what returns thou hast made. If thou hast not brought forth wild grapes, hast thou brought forth full grapes, ripe grapes, clusters large and sweet, pleasing to God, and salutary to those around thee? Has not thy best obedience been too constrained and heartless? And hast thou not often acted rather from a spirit of bondage than of liberty? Has not God, then, a controversy with His ungrateful vine? May He not justly command His clouds to rain no more upon it? Has He not threatened to cast the wild vines

into eternal fire, and even His own vines, when unfruitful, into the furnace of sharp affliction? O beware, thou barren vine! Bring forth fruit. Answer God's call and cost. As the heavens hear the earth in sending down fructifying showers, and as the earth hears its inhabitants in producing abundant supplies; so hear thou the Lord's summons, and respond, with answerable fruitfulness, to the droppings of the sanctuary, and the sweet influences of divine grace. Abound in the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These, when wrought in thee by the Holy Comforter, and brought forth by thee in the temper and practice of thy daily life, are accepted and honored by God as His own fruits.

Employ your treasure also in such a manner as to answer God's appointed ends. These are His own glory, your personal sanctification, and the spiritual profit of others. Be not self-seeking, but self-denying in your layings out; otherwise you will lose both your labor and your reward. Indeed, it is a sign only of barrenness, when we bear fruit but to ourselves. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." The true believer, on the other hand, makes it his supreme object to honor God in all that he does. And this the fruits of holy obedience are well fitted to ac-

complish. The vine of Eshcol will commend the land of Canaan. Clusters of ripe grapes will glorify God, the chief Husbandman, and evince the fatness of the soil, even the courts of the Lord, and the institutions of His Gospel. The glory of God, as manifested and displayed to His creatures, is promoted by our faithfulness and activity in His service. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." And is it not a blessed thing to be an instrument in glorifying God? This was the end of our creation, of our redemption, and of all the impulses and operations of the sanctifying Spirit. While, therefore, you endeavor to be richly covered with the fruits of righteousness, make the glory of God at all times your grand aim and purpose. The observant Christian, who diligently cultivates the vineyard of his own soul, may properly reap the comfort which such care is calculated to afford; but let him give all the glory to Christ, to whom only it belongs. Let the language of the Psalmist be ever the motto of his feelings and of his conduct. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." God will not suffer His glory to be given to another. It is gross sacrilege to attribute any merit to ourselves. "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." If you are called to make a confession

of your faith, and to produce your treasure before a persecuting and gainsaying world, be not afraid of men, or ashamed of the Gospel, but speak out boldly for Christ, and avow, without shrinking or reserve, your adherence to Him, and your devotion to His cause. In all such circumstances, let the direction, given by the apostle Peter, furnish the rule by which you act. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." This passage sets before you the profession which you are required to make. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Blink not your light: disguise not your sentiments, in accommodation to the prejudices, or from a dread of the frowns of men. It also teaches both the principle which should control you, and the end which you should seek. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Honor Him, by making His grace the source of all your actions, and His glory their aim. And then it describes the disposition of mind with which you should stand forth on the side of truth—"with meekness and fear"—not in a boasting, ostentatious, or contentious spirit; but in the exercise of humility, benevolence, and a reverent regard for the authority of God. Some

may speak confidently, and act fearlessly, and even consent to suffer for a good cause, and yet be the Devil's martyrs, because their only motive is, to gain reputation among men, to uphold an opinion, to please a faction, to gratify a caprice, or merit something at the hands of God. The motive makes or mars the action. Vain glory spoils great achievements. Many bear the cross who do not follow Christ. They are conformed to Him in the fact of suffering, but very unlike Him in the temper with which they suffer. But such will never receive the reward of those who suffer for Christ's sake. The same may be said of prayer, of almsgiving, of duties that involve self-mortification, or of any other excellent ways of laying out a treasure. If they spring from no higher principle than that men may take notice of them, the work is as if it were not done, and the doer in danger of being undone.

Subordinate to the glory of God, the good of our own souls and of the souls of others should be the result to which all our labors are directed. God has so closely connected His glory and the good of souls, that both may be promoted together. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; that God in all things

may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Thus feel and act. Make the glory of God the ultimate end of your being, and seek to advance that glory by care for your own salvation, and by intense and ceaseless efforts for the salvation of a dying world.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXCELLENCE AND ADVANTAGE OF HAVING A TREASURE IN THE HEART.

In approaching the close of my subject, I would offer, at this point, some remarks suited both to encourage those who possess the treasure which has been described, and to stimulate such as are destitute of it, to make its attainment their first and highest aim. And with a view to this, I shall further illustrate, in several particulars, the value and usefulness of such a treasure in the heart.

1. A spiritually endowed soul is of great worth. It is the rarest piece of all God's workmanship. It is that surpassing product, on which the almighty Builder has bestowed matchless care and skill, as well as infinite love and grace. When He formed the worlds, a single omnipotent word spoke them into being. But when He would restore His lost image in man, a far more costly exhibition was demanded. Every attribute was put in requisition. Wisdom must devise the way. Justice must guard the Divine authority. Mercy and Love must send the Son to become incarnate, and

by His obedience and death to make atonement for sin, and vindicate the law which we had broken. And then the Holy Spirit of power must descend to apply the sacrifice, and regenerate the soul. This moral transformation, thus wrought in the heart, is a greater work, and of more value, than the whole material universe. A renewed soul is the epitome of the creation, the clearest likeness of the Divinity on earth, the true portraiture of God in man, and a blessed treasury of spiritual perfections. The soul is the glory of man, and grace is the glory of the soul. Every man is so far excellent as he is religious. A Christian's greatest ornament and dignity consist in what he is with respect to God. Gracious souls are truly precious, and such as are precious in God's account are honorable, and of more worth than the richest princes and largest kingdoms. Well may they be the Lord's jewels, who have a treasure of jewels locked up in their breasts. These precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold, though men esteem them as earthen pitchers. It is true, that they exhibit little of outward splendor to attract the carnal eye. As it was with their Divine Redeemer and Exemplar, of whom His despisers said, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him;" so the saints may appear mean and sordid

to external view; but could you penetrate their hidden being, you would find them all glorious within. They are like the tabernacle built by Moses, whose outside was covered with rams' skins, goats' hair, badgers' skins, and such coarse materials; but whose inside was adorned with gold, silver, precious stones, and curious workmanship. In this two-fold aspect, the servants of God are compared in Scripture to the tents of Kedar, and to the curtains of Solomon. The word Kedar signifies blackness, and the posterity of Ishmael's second son, which bore this name, dwelt in tents made of hair cloth. Thus believers are now dwelling in tents, and through the afflictions, persecutions, and infirmities, incident to them in this weary pilgrimage, are black and unlovely to the sight. But could you open the tent door, and look into the secret cabinet of their hearts, you would discover a treasure of the rarest gems that ever mortal eyes beheld. You would see them to be "as comely as the curtains of Solomon"—as glorious and beautiful as the embroidered hangings that surrounded his regal couch. Take another familiar illustration. If you were to see an earthen pot full of gold; and if, while you looked only at the outside, and knew nothing of what was within, you were asked its value, your answer would probably be, a few pence. And yet that insignificant

vessel might, with the treasure in it, be worth many thousand pounds. A coarse canvass purse may contain a vast sum of money. A Christian is not to be rated according to his poor facing, but according to his rich lining. He has a priceless treasure in a rude earthen vessel. You must not censure him before you see every part of his character fully disclosed at the great day. His true and real life is now hid with Christ in God; but when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with Him in glory. The saints are here as princes in disguise. They are walking in a strange country; and it doth not yet appear who or what they are. But God has His time to unveil their dignity, and reveal their excellence. The pearl cannot be seen till the shell of the fish is broken; and when these vile bodies—these rough integuments which envelop the soul—are dissolved, then this precious treasure will be manifest. O the exceeding worth of a poor despised child of God! His bosom would dilate with holy exultation, did he fully perceive the honor which the Lord has put on him, and the inestimable wealth which He has laid up in him. Man is said to be a little world in himself; but the Christian has an embryo heaven in his heart. He possesses a monopoly of the best commodities, a rich magazine of invaluable things for the de-

light of God, the profit of men, and the comfort of his own soul. Though the wicked account the followers of Christ not fit to live in the world, as though this earth were too good for them; yet God regards the world as not worthy of them. They are too good to breathe in this foul air, and shall be translated to heaven. "A Christian," says Luther, "is a son of God, the heir of a kingdom, the brother of Christ, the companion of angels, the lord of the world, a partaker of the Divine nature." Be encouraged and cheered, therefore, O thou trembling saint, by the thought of what thou art. Be alarmed and aroused, O thou careless worldling, by the thought of what thou art not. Who would not prefer the spiritual wealth of the one, with all his earthly trials, to the spiritual poverty of the other, with all his earthly delights? Methinks the view of what a Christian is, and the prospect of what he shall be, should excite in every rational mind a holy ambition to be filled with these riches, and to be clothed with all this glory.

2. This treasure prepares its possessor for all conditions. Nothing can come amiss to one thus furnished. He is in a situation to receive all dispensations with contentment and security; for no temporal vicissitudes, however calamitous, can affect his real interests, or shake the foundation of his

peace. Let Paul and Silas have their treasure with them, and they can sing in the stocks at midnight. Let David be in a pilgrimage, his treasure will make him both company and melody. A Christian cannot be parted from his treasure; but wherever he goes, he can say with more truth than the ancient philosopher, "I carry my all with me." When Cyprian was threatened by the Roman proconsul with banishment, he answered, "He is no exile, who has God in his mind." Separate God from the believer, and you would indeed undo him. If you could rob him of the possession of grace, you might make him miserable; but not otherwise. He that is out of hell, and has a heaven in his heart, can have no cause of shame or terror. When he is under sharp trials, and others condole with him, he may say as Christ did to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." In regard to sufferings that may lie before him, he can exclaim with Paul, "I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." God has deposited a treasure in his heart, and he is willing to employ it in whatever way the Lord shall require. In being thus laid out, the treasure is not impaired, but increased. By afflictions, truths are improved, graces exercised, experience enlarged, comforts wonderfully augmented; and these permanent advantages more than coun-

terbalance the temporary anguish of sorrow. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." The believing Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better, and an enduring substance. Observe, they knew it in themselves, that is, they had a lively experience of it in their own hearts, and now by the loss of their worldly estates this experience was made more clear, increased, and confirmed. "It is," says Tertullian, "an excellent merchandize, to lose some things, that we may gain greater." O blessed exchange, to part with earth for heaven, to be stripped of temporal riches, and to receive eternal riches into the heart! A single particle of true grace is of more value than mountains of wordly wealth; and happy is the soul that loses the latter, to be endowed with a large share of the former. Trace the path of that noble army of martyrs, of that "cloud of witnesses," brought to view in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; and learn from their example to fear not man, and to shrink not from any furnace of trial; for you shall be infinite gainers in the final result. A treasured soul is still gathering more to itself from every dispensation of its heavenly Father, from His

rebukes and corrections, as well as from the interpositions of His kindness and favor. For every event a sincere and upright heart is prepared, being no less contented than edified with whatever God does, and disposed to make a good improvement of all the dealings of His hand, and all the arrangements of His wisdom.

3. This divine treasure qualifies the saint for noble enterprizes. "The people that know their God, shall be strong and do exploits;" while unsound professors may be corrupted by flatteries, or chased away by threats. The greater treasure you have, the more signal things may you do for God. The Lord will own you to achieve much for Him; nd you shall glorify Him in suffering much for His cause. Paul was well stored with this treasure; and what mere man ever accomplished more for God? Who ever traveled over so much of the world to publish the message of salvation, as this unwearied apostle? From Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, he fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Throughout the various provinces of Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Achaia, in Rome, then the centre and metropolis of the civilized world, he proclaimed the tidings of redemption; visiting, in the fulfillment of his mission, the most remote and inaccessible districts; encountering the severest privations and hardships; "in jour-

neyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thrist, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." So fully did he verify his own declaration, that "he labored more abundantly than they all." And whence was it that he thus surpassed others in the extent of his toils and sacrifices? It was because he had a large stock to expend, a well furnished head and heart. The Lord, therefore, called him to more abundant labors, and crowned his labors with more abundant success. God usually honors treasured souls, not only by putting them to hard service in His cause, but by rendering them eminently instrumental in promoting it. Such He selects to be captains in the warfare—leaders to go before others in the sharpest conflicts and most harzardous undertakings. And while He thrusts them into the thickest of the fight, His grace gives them the victory. How often, in the days of persecution, have even feeble women encountered and conquered the most learned enemies of the truth. The subtlest inquisitors and examiners have been confounded by the answers of spiritually-minded Christians. Sweetly has that precious promise been

performed in God's children. "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Under His teachings, the suffering confessors of Christ have been so inspired with holy confidence and joy, amidst their tortures, that in some instances when their bodily organs had ceased to act, their full hearts have found a miraculous vent. Thus Prudentius tells us of one Romanus, a noble martyr of Antioch, who suffered in the persecution under the emperor Dioclesian, that when, by the command of the prefect, his teeth were knocked out, and his cheeks sorely cut with knives, he said, "I thank thee, O prefect, that thou hast opened to me so many mouths, whereby I may preach my Lord and Saviour Christ. Look; how many wounds I have, so many mouths have I lauding and praising God." And when, by the order of his pitiless judge, his tongue was torn out by the roots, he nevertheless continued to speak, saying, "He that speaketh of Christ, never wants a tongue; think not that the voice that uttereth Christ hath need of the tongue to be its minister." Of another it is recorded, that when his tormentors put fire and frankincense into his hand, and laid him on the altar,

thinking that by the heat of the fire he would scatter some incense on the altar, he kept his hand fast closed, and let the flame eat about it, singing, "Blessed be the Lord my God who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Though you cannot expect such miracles in your own case, yet fear not the extremity of trial, whether it arise from the correcting discipline of God, or from the opposition of evil men. If you possess this treasure, it will be produced in such a manner, and at such times, as will most honor the Saviour, silence the wicked, and comfort your own hearts. I know it is the discouraging apprehension of many, that if the Lord were to call them to sharp encounters, they should deny Him, betray His truth, and lamentably evince their own weakness. But be not dismayed, trembling believer. The grace of God shall be sufficient for thee. Thy little strength shall do wonders. If thou hast a right treasure within, it will appear to the admiration of others, and beyond thine own expectation.

4. A treasured soul is God's delight. In nothing does the Almighty more rejoice than in beholding His creatures filled with the good things of His kingdom. He takes pleasure in the sons of men. But amongst men, a believing heart is the Lord's highest throne, and amongst sincere Christians none can make Him so welcome, or

furnish Him such good entertainment, as he whose whole character is beautified with these blessed ornaments. Such a soul spreads for its Saviour a sumptuous feast, and gives Him a cheerful invitation. Thus in the Song of Solomon, the Church is represented as saying, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." That is, let Him enjoy satisfaction in the product of His own free grace. He hath provided a sacrifice, and prepared the feast of salvation; and let the graces, which His Spirit has wrought, delight their Author. And no sooner does she invite Him than He replies, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk." In other words, He reaps the graces and virtues of the pious soul with as much delight, as husbandmen reap the harvest of their fields, or grape-gatherers pluck the rich clusters of their vineyards. O with what pleasure does the Lord accept the holy actings of a treasured saint! But, on the other hand, He contemns and rejects the costly offerings of graceless souls. He cares not for their thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil. No, no; a heart stored with graces is better than a house full of sacrifices. The trappings and parade of worship may be dis-

pensed with, where the substance is found in gracious acts and heavenly dispositions. A little of the honey of true piety is more pleasing to God, than the mere comb of duties, however skillfully composed, and exactly performed. Happy is the soul which the Lord thus delights to visit, and which is thus fitted to receive and entertain Him. O that we could say with the Church, "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my Beloved!" In a similar spirit, let each of us say, this grace or that disposition, I will lay up for my spiritual Husband, Jesus Christ, and bring it forth to give Him content. This smell of sweet perfume shall greet Him at His entrance. I will entertain Him at the doors at home, in the fields abroad. I will bid Him welcome on all occasions. The resolve and the wish of holy David shall be mine. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." I will go to my closet, and there seek and find my Father who "seeth in secret." I will go to His table, and partake of His holy supper, and "while the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard shall send forth the smell thereof." My "bruised spices"—my exercised graces—shall be as pleasant odors to Him. He will smell a sweet savor

from my sacrifices, and my prayers shall ascend before Him as incense, acceptable through Jesus Christ. It is not the happiness of every one thus to enjoy God, or to be well pleasing to Him. Some may come near with Moses, while others must worship afar off. But none are so capable of intimate communion with Him as the well furnished Christian. Ordinarily, he who has the greatest degree of personal religion, will have the sweetest visits. To such as bring out of their treasure the precious fruits of the Spirit, God will open the precious treasures of His love. While there is much good laid up for them that have grace, it is brought forth to them that use grace. O, then, labor to acquire much grace, and study to employ it faithfully. Send your lamb to the Ruler of the land; bring your offerings to Jesus Christ. The wise men from the east set us an example in the welcome which they brought to the infant Redeemer. "And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh"—answerable to His three offices of King, Priest, and Prophet. In the time of the law, no man was to come to the Lord empty-handed; and if you come full-hearted with this treasure, and full-handed in drawing it out, you may be assured that the Lord will be open-hearted to admit you, and open-handed to

fill your hungry souls with ravishing supplies. You shall have the presence of the Saviour to cheer you through all this night of affliction, and to be your glory and your bliss in the regions of everlasting day.

5. Richly furnished Christians can live well in a time of spiritual dearth. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied." When others are hungry and thirsty, and their souls fainting, the treasured believer has a permanent supply to which he can have recourse; for he has laid up a stock of grace and comfort that will stand him in stead in an evil day. It is true, that a famine of the word is an afflictive judgment to the saints. The ordinances of the Gospel are their glory, the excellency of their strength, and the desire of their eyes; and the temporary suspension of these grieves them more than their total loss does the wicked, although the latter have a deeper interest in their continuance. The children of God have that to live upon which natural men have not. They possess a fund of inward strength that will carry them to the Rock of Ages; a stream of grace in their hearts, that will lead them to the Fountain of grace. Real saints are never famished, but are always fed and sustained by indwelling supplies. They can make a better shift than others in seasons of prevailing scarcity. They have resources within

themselves; a treasure of holy truths, principles, and affections, safely garnered in their hearts, which can make them a rich feast even in a desert; for where these are the presence of God is always to be enjoyed. The well of living water, and the hidden manna, in the bosom of a believer, will nourish and support him in the absence of outward instrumentalities. When he cannot go to the assemblies of the saints, he may find in the closet, and at the family altar, the "house of God, and the gate of heaven." The Lord is every where to be found; and He can make amends in private for the want of public privileges. The word opened and applied, in the faithful ministrations of the sanctuary, is indeed convincing, satisfying, refreshing. But when the Christian is shut out from these, he has still in his hands the Bible, the source from which all their lessons are drawn, and the promise of the Spirit to bring all things to his remembrance. If his spiritual senses are well exercised by habits of scriptural study and meditation, why may he not preach to himself in the want of other preachers? A mature and established Christian may certainly be able to digest strong meat, though he have to carve for himself. Luther declared a single verse of the Bible to be of more worth than a world; but with still greater truth may this be said of a believer's treasure, by

which he is enabled to understand and improve all Scripture. History informs us of some Christians, who in dark times, having got a few leaves of the Bible, betook themselves to secret places, and there read and pondered them again and again, until, even from the fragmentary glimpses of divine truth thus obtained, they received incredible profit and comfort, and arrived at a high degree of knowledge and courage. In like manner, the children of God may seek and behold His face in private communion with Him, in self-conference, prayer, and praise. They may even find it a happy exchange. The little glass of secret duties may present the countenance of God as clearly and as sweetly to the eye of their souls, as the broad mirror of public ordinances. I say not this to depreciate the appointed institutions of the Gospel, or to derogate from their sacredness and efficacy. "God has ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The regular and stated dispensation of His word is the chief instrumentality which He employs for the conversion of sinners, and the establishment of His people; the main channel by which He conveys the purifying influences of His grace. This, when within our reach, is always to be preferred to every other means of instruction and edification whatever; and when, in the providence of God, it is with-

drawn from us, or we withdrawn from it, the want of open vision is greatly to be lamented. We are to be sorrowful for the breaking up of solemn assemblies, and to mourn sore when the gates of Zion mourn. But what I wish to enforce is this, that when, by persecution or other causes, public teachers are driven into corners, or when we are necessarily placed in situations where we can have no communication with them, God may supply their lack in some other way. Lest, however, this sentiment should be condemned as a novelty, I will sustain it by the words of a learned author. "What," asks Buchanan, "shall they do who want the opportunity of frequenting public ordinances? Such," he answers, "must travel abroad, and seek far and near for them. But if they cannot find them, they must exercise themselves in religious duties at home; because the kingdom of God is within them, and because the word, without its public ministration, may be the power of God unto salvation. The faithful can never be without the matter and marrow of ordinances, though they may be compelled to want the visible form." O what a blessed thing is it to have, in the possession of enlarged and thorough piety, a perennial fountain of strength and comfort! Who can estimate the importance of thus carrying within ourselves a principle that will furnish us with un-

failing light and plenty in times of darkness and scarcity?

6. A heavenly treasure in the heart of a Christian has this further advantage, that it turns every thing to the increase of his stock. It is the property of true religion, that, by a sort of holy attraction, it gathers contributions from all sides to augment itself. Like fire, it converts whatever it touches into its own nature. It is a divine alembic, that extracts pure gold out of all substances, agreeably to that memorable promise, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Prosperity and adversity, wealth and poverty, renown and ignominy, thraldom and liberty, sickness and health, success and disappointment, satanical suggestions, violent temptations, and victorious resistance, minister alike to this end. Nay, such a result may even be ascribed to the imperfections and infirmities which yet remain in the believer—not, indeed, as their legitimate tendency, but as the incidental effect which they are made to produce under the overruling care of our gracious and all-wise Physician. The most virulent poisons, when employed by skillful hands, may sometimes become very efficient remedies. Thus God can so control the breakings in of temptation, and the breakings out of corruption, as to

turn them into an instrument of good—an occasion of deeper humility—a rope to bring down the top-sails of spiritual pride—an incentive to holy watchfulness and jealousy—a means to promote charity and sympathy for others; to endear God to us for his pardoning mercy; to alienate our hearts from this sinning, weary world, and to make us long more ardently for that state of final victory and glory, in which we shall sin no more. These and such like uses God makes of sin, or He would not suffer this putrid corpse, this "body of death," to hang upon the souls of living saints. We know that He designed, in His infinite and all-seeing wisdom, to raise a glorious structure of grace and salvation on the ruins of Adam's apostacy, or He would never have permitted it to take place. In the same way, He purposes to discipline and improve His children by means of their remaining depravity, or He would wholly eradicate it at once and forever. It was a profound view of this singular arrangement on the part of God, which made John Knox say, "That his graces had done him the most hurt, and his sins the most good." To many, such a statement would appear to be an incomprehensible paradox: but an experienced Christian can easily solve the mystery, for he has often, by Divine assistance, brought heaven out of hell, light out of darkness, sweet advantages from sad

miscarriages. Sometimes he can say, I had sinned, unless I had sinned, I should have fallen, unless I had fallen; the farthest way about has proved the nearest way home; God has suffered me to break my bones, that He might set them more strongly. A deep-thinking divine has said: "We cannot go to heaven by geometry; we must fetch a compass round by the gates of hell, and hear what news with Satan, ere we can be duly humbled, or can relish the promises aright." Yet guard well against a mistake here. For the benefits, which may thus arise to believers from their infirmities, no thanks are due to sin and Satan. All is owing to the free and sovereign grace of God, who brings good out of evil. Nor let any adventure upon sin under the persuasion that it will eventuate in their good. This were to "sin that grace may abound;" which is the Devil's logic, and a most fatal presumption. When the Christian falls, it is only the Lord that can help him to improve his falls for his spiritual good; and this the Lord will not do for those who fall on purpose that He may raise them again. If the servant of God, through accident or inadvertence, be cast from the pinnacle of the temple, he may hope that angel-hands will preserve him from fatal injury; but no such protection will be extended to those who deliberately fling themselves down.

But while God may, and often does, thus overrule the imperfections of His people for their ultimate advantage, it is still to the direct dispensations of His own providence that the promise more especially refers. These, whether sweet or severe, are all arranged and adapted to promote the growth and development of holiness. The north wind is sharp and piercing, the south wind soft and cherishing; but both blow good to the Christian, and cause his graces to spring forth in lively exercise. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." If the balmy breath of mercy fan the treasured soul, it melts it in devout gratitude, and draws it nearer to God, by the sense of His unmerited goodness. If the rough blasts of judgment sweep over it, they drive it further from sin and the world, and force it to shelter itself more closely under the shadow of the Eternal Throne. The well furnished believer can draw spiritual blessings from the most untoward events, and gather a rich moral harvest from the wildest and dreariest desert which earth can show him. If from outward poverty, he learn to be "poor in spirit," it is a great gain, and more to be coveted than a mine of gold. Equally beneficial and salutary are all the lessons which affliction imparts.

Moreover, the possession of this treasure serves,

in a manner, to consecrate all states and circumstances; so that let a man have more or less of other things, he has sufficient if he have this within him. "Godliness with contentment" is not only enough, but "gain," yea, "great gain;" it makes up every deficiency, and sanctifies every condition. That man has nothing who wants this; and he who has it wants nothing else. Wicked men may have much, but godly men have all things. When Jacob and Esau were conversing about the present which the former sent to the latter to pacify his anger, Esau said, "I have enough, my brother," and Jacob also said, "I have enough." But in the strict import of the Hebrew words, Esau said, "I have much," and Jacob said, "I have all," intimating that Jacob's treasure was far beyond his brother's, as the whole is more than a part. The treasure of grace, hidden in the heart of a believer, sheds a blessing over all his outward lot, and makes him equally contented with want or with abundance. And though his earthly portion may be small and scanty, yet it is more thankfully received, does him more good, and is more cheerfully used for the good of others, than the large and overflowing revenues of the ungodly. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

7. This treasure is absolutely safe. All other

treasures are exposed to loss. A thousand mischances may befall them; a thousand accidents may sweep them away. They may, at any moment, be rent from our grasp; and even should we succeed in retaining them to the last, death will soon come to loosen our hold, and bear us into a world where they cannot follow us But the believer's treasure can never be lost. It is securely locked up in the eternal Covenant, and guarded by the inviolable promise and faithfulness of God. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is true, that an external profession and mental accomplishments may be lost; but sincere, saving grace can never perish. Genuine piety may be partially obscured, but it cannot be destroyed; it may be diminished for a time, but can never be totally wasted. The infinite Jehovah is the Keeper of Israel. He who is the portion of your cup, will maintain your lot. It is not the reality nor the strength of grace, but God alone, that supports the Christian, and upholds him from falling. Received grace will not preserve without assisting grace; nor will faith, however strong and habitual, of itself carry the soul on to death and through death; but we are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. The power of God is the efficient cause—faith, the in-

strument by which He acts. God keeps faith in exercise and faith keeps the soul steadfast. They that have Mary's part and Mary's heart, shall never lose their portion. God will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him, and bestow on His saints whatever is requisite to secure their perseverance, to give them the victory in every conflict, and to crown them with glory in the end. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." This is an expression of vast depth and fullness, implying that God has pledged himself to meet all the possible necessities of our Christian calling. Our heavenly Father gives His traveling children a sufficient stock to defray all the expenses of their earthly journey, and to discharge, with some measure of sincerity, every obligation which they owe to God and man. It is true, that some saints are required to live at a high rate, in costly duties, and arduous efforts of self-denial; but this large expenditure, so far from impairing, only increases their store. A Christian is no loser, but a gainer, by every sacrifice which he makes in obedience to the Saviour, and for the advancement of His cause. The more strength you lay out for God, the more you receive from Him. And this is one great means to prevent a spiritual treasure from being lost. Preserved by the faithful word of the Omnipotent, and kept in

constant use by holy exercises, neither men nor devils can rob you of it. You may adopt the triumphant challenge of the apostle, and say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing in earth or hell can loose this knot between a precious Saviour and a gracious soul. The covenant is ordered in all things, and sure. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee." Grace is an immortal seed, and shall abide forever. God may repent the bestowal of common gifts, but these saving gifts and this holy calling are without repentance. All the motions and commotions in the world cannot shake the believer's interest in Christ. The flames which shall burn up the world itself, cannot dissolve his blessed union with his Saviour, but shall rather cement and perfect it forever. He may stand upon

the world's ruins, and say, "I have nothing of all this huge heap to lose. I shall not be a jot the poorer for the stupendous conflagration of this goodly fabric. Let brutish worldlings weep and wail over their fair houses, their large domains, their sumptuous luxuries, and their gorgeous attire; I am rich still, as rich as I ever was, and richer; for what I once had only in hope and expectation, I have now in full possession and enjoyment." Augustine discourses sweetly concerning one Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, who, having lost a great estate by the invasion of the Barbarians, prayed thus, "Lord, I shall not be troubled with gold and silver, since where my all is, Thou knowest;" for, as Augustine remarks, "he had his all there, where He, who had foretold to the world the coming of these evils, had warned him to deposit and treasure it up." A little after, he relates that some were tortured by the Barbarians to make them discover their riches; but adds, "They could neither betray nor lose that good, by which themselves were good, namely, their graces and virtues." O what would you not give to have your estates secured in a day of plunder and desolation? Here is an insuring office—the God of heaven will secure the portion of your souls, that it shall never be pillaged. Certainly it is a rich privilege, that in a world where we can be sure of nothing, *that* which alone can

make us happy, *that* and that *only* can be made sure.

8. God knows and owns that treasure, which is sometimes concealed from the possessor. This is a most sweet and consoling thought. "Our life is hid with Christ in God;" and frequently it is so hidden as to be imperceptible to our own eyes, as well as to the eyes of others. But still it is "hid with God," and He that hides can find. Saints are called God's "hidden ones;" and their spiritual birthright and dignity may be said to be hidden, not only with respect to their safety and secresy, but often also with respect to the obscurity with which they are manifested to the saints themselves. A Christian may have much more of God in him than he is aware of. It is one thing to have grace, and quite another to know that we have grace. A sincere child of God, while he has the seed and root of holiness, may want the bud and blossom of actual comfort. He has always a solid basis for divine consolations, yet, from a variety of causes, he may, at certain intervals, be without their sensible enjoyment. Sometimes God withdraws the light of His countenance, suspends the witness of His Spirit, and leaves the soul in darkness and desertion. Sometimes the believer is negligent, and does not faithfully use the appointed means for obtaining and preserving

an assurance of his interest in Christ. Sometimes, by seeking for more comfort than God sees fit to bestow, he forgets, denies, and so neutralizes what he has. And sometimes from the indulgence of a cherished sin, from the prevalence of a worldly spirit, or from the influence of a melancholy temper, the features of the "new man" within him become so veiled and clouded as not to be discernible to his view. Every Christian knows by sad experience, that he is often at a loss, and cannot tell what to make of his condition. He has his nights as well as his days; a nipping winter as well as a flourishing summer. The sap of grace may retreat into the root—the flowers and plants may shrink and disappear—the streams may cease to flow—and the whole spiritual creation in his heart may droop and lose its verdure. Yet life is still there. A reviving spring will come, when the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shall reanimate these hidden graces, and so draw them forth in blossoms and fruits of holy obedience, that the saint shall live again, and know that he lives; shall believe, and know that he believes. In the mean time, while he thus "walks in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." Let him cast his anchor within the veil, and repose his troubled heart on the Rock of Ages. Faith is a

venture, and you must venture your all on this bottom. You must confide in God when you cannot see Him, and lean upon Him when you cannot feel His presence. Diligently employ the means which He has ordained for communicating comfort; study His promises; meditate on His love; awaken your slumbering affections; recall your past experiences; renew your repentance; forsake all sin; be importunate at the throne of grace—and hope and joy will soon spring up afresh in your heart. Peace is the usual result of the exercise of grace; and as the striking of flint and steel together produces fire, so the acting of sincere grace upon its proper object begets the light and heat of spiritual comfort. Nay, the very pouring out of your heart to God will be itself a precious and healing comfort. If you have a treasure of grace, God will, in due time, give you a treasure of joy. Or should He, in His wisdom, delay this for a season, He will still maintain His interest in you, and keep you from fainting. If you have not spiritual rejoicings, you shall have spiritual support. If your state be not sweet, yet it shall be sure. The grace of the Redeemer shall be sufficient for you, and that is equivalent to the mercy desired. The less comfort you have in the way, the more you shall have in the end; and it matters little whether comfort come an hour before

death, or an hour after, since come it certainly will. Amidst all your doubts and fears, therefore, seek to approve your heart unto God. He searches your heart, and knows what you are and what you have, though neither yourself nor others know it. He sees the principles by which you are actuated; watches the struggles of light and darkness within you; and regards with favor every effort which you make to shake off the fetters of unbelief and sin, and walk forth in the glorious liberty of His sons. He knows and he approves the way of the righteous. Your path may be, for the present, enveloped in gloom, and you may have to press onward in it through many sorrows, and anxieties, and conflicts. Still your end shall be peace. In the hurry of temptation, you may be ready to misjudge both your character and your conduct; yet your final happiness does not depend on the account which you may form of yourself, but on God's account of you in Christ. A sincere believer may not always be able to recognize the actual workings of faith in his own mind, and yet may be satisfied respecting the object of faith. There may be times when he cannot say, I know that I do now truly believe; but still he can say, I know in whom I have believed, and desire to believe again. With a trust that wavers not because the cloud is over him, he can exclaim,

I know not, indeed, how it is with me; I have lost myself in a labyrinth of cares and fears, and see not the path before me; yet I put my hand into His, who knows the way and can lead me out, and confide in Him who shed His precious blood for my soul, to guide it in safety to the rest and heritage of His saints.

9. The well furnished Christian has a treasure in heaven. His best treasure, indeed, is there; for the treasure in his heart is the counterpart of a far richer one above. These are always conjoined. Never is any soul brought up to heaven, into which God does not first bring heaven down. He furnishes the soul by the operations of His grace, and takes possession of it by the earnest of His Spirit, before He fills it with glory. Reader! hast thou a treasure laid up in thy heart? That is the token and pledge of a still more ample investment. Light is sown not only for the righteous, but in the hearts of the righteous. If precious jewels of grace are laid up for Christ in the temple of thy soul, glorious things are laid up for thee in the sanctuary of the New Jerusalem—things, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind of man conceived. Happy art thou, O believer! happy, whatever thy outward lot. Thou mayest be the child of poverty and suffering; but thou art rich—"rich in faith," and the

heir of an eternal kingdom. Well mayest thou both sigh and smile at the mad and frantic votaries of the world, who weary themselves for very vanity, and torment themselves in toiling and caring for an earthly treasure, which, when obtained, begets disgust rather than content, and leads at last to perdition. It is recorded of Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, that he lived very parsimoniously, affirming that he had nothing, not even a penny. Yet, after his death, immense treasures which he had hidden in the ground, were discovered by means of a key fastened about his neck. But, alas, that key could not open the gates of heaven, nor that treasure purchase for him an admission into glory. Unlike this carnal and wretched prelate, the believing soul has its treasure above, and possesses by faith an interest in the Lord Jesus, who holds the key of David, who is already entered into the holy place, and has opened to all His redeemed ones the everlasting mansions, which He has gone to prepare and embellish for their reception. O trembling Christian! fear not. They that belong to Christ shall not miss of salvation. As the Head is in heaven, all the members shall at length be there also. He will open the world of glory to those who opened their hearts to receive the King of Glory. The treasure of grace raises the heart to this treasure

above, and lays up provision for an eternal state. This stream runs to that ocean, and shall at last be absorbed in its infinite blessedness. O let this excite all to seek a treasure of grace here, that they may have an immortal treasure hereafter. Alas, if you acquire a treasure only for this world, what will you do for a treasure when you must go hence? You cannot live here always; and when the hour of your departure shall arrive, how little will all your earthly possessions avail to secure for you an entrance into eternal happiness! Lay up in store for yourselves, therefore, a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." It is related of one of the kings of Sparta, that, observing it to be the practice of his countrymen to depose their kings annually, and thrust them into a foreign isle to live in misery—instead of indulging in prodigality as his predecessors had done, he provided for himself, during his year of office, an ample estate in the country to which he was to be banished. Be yours the wisdom to act in a similar manner. Amidst the abundance of temporal blessings, provide for the day when you must surrender them all, and pass into a new and everlasting scene. Time is the seed-plot of eter-

nity; and what you sow here will spring up into an infinite harvest of bliss or woe in the world to come. O happy will it be for you then, if now you sow to the Spirit! A crown of righteousness is prepared for those, to whom righteousness is imputed by the justifying merits of the Saviour, and in whom righteousness is wrought by the renovating influence of His Spirit. Let such bless God for present mercy, and long for its consummation in eternal glory.

10. The treasure of felicity, reserved for the believer in heaven, is proportioned to the treasure of holiness laid up in his heart on earth. It is undoubtedly true, that in the world above the happiness of every saint will be perfect, so that they that have least shall feel no lack. But, at the same time, there is the strongest reason for the belief, that the happiness of the redeemed will differ in degree, and that they who have had the largest measure of grace, will have the largest measure of glory. Grace expands the soul, and capacitates it for receiving richer revenues of celestial light and blessedness. If several vessels, some great and some small, be dipped in the sea, all will be completely filled, yet the former will contain more than the latter. So will it be with the spirits of the glorified in heaven. Such is the immense and inconceivable bliss of that bright realm, that all shall

have all, and nothing shall be wanting to any to consummate their felicity. As it is impossible for a soul to be in heaven and not be happy, so shall its every faculty and its every recess be surcharged with happiness. Each vessel of glory shall be filled to overflowing with the new wine of the kingdom. God shall be all *in* all and *to* all. So infinite and all-surrounding is that ocean of glory, that the saints shall be completely submerged in it. They shall "enter into their Master's joy," and not merely that joy enter into them, though they shall be as full of it as their hearts can hold. O how will they bathe themselves in those rivers of pleasure! The mind shall be full of knowledge, the will of holiness. Every affection shall be gratified, every desire fulfilled. "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness." Nor shall there be any envying of each other's happiness, though one star differ from another star in glory; but each shall bear his part in the lower or higher praises of God, with harmonious variety, yet in perfect symphony. Certainly, the unfading crown of glory will be as weighty on the head of every saint as he is able to bear, though that weight will be his joy; for nothing is heavy in its proper element, and heaven is the proper element of "the spirits of just men made perfect." Hence "the four living creatures"—representatives of the whole commun-

ity of the faithful—are said to "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Yet their work is their rest. And in this delightful labor all shall engage according to their respective powers and qualifications. Some shall sound forth the praises of God on an instrument of six strings, some on one of eight, others on one of ten, being fitted by more enlarged faculties to bear a higher part in the universal chorus of the saved. As we know there will be degrees of punishment in hell, since Christ has distinctly told us that final retribution shall be more tolerable for some than for others; so, by the rule of contraries, we may infer that there will be degrees of happiness in heaven. And this conclusion rests not on inference alone, but is clearly borne out by the announcements of Scripture. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmanent; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Here we have a distinct implication that those, who in this life are endowed with an eminent treasure of spiritual wisdom, and who so employ it as to be eminently instrumental in the salvation of others, shall in the life to come be invested with surpassing glory. Of a similar import is the declaration of the apostle, "He that soweth

sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully;" which, as both Calvin and Beza well interpret it, refers not only to the temporal incomes of piety and beneficence, but likewise to their eternal rewards. The same truth is also plainly taught by the Parable of the Talents, in which the honors bestowed on the faithful servants were graduated in exact accordance with their improvement of the trust committed to them. From all these statements, it is manifestly evident, that those whom God honors with most grace, and who honor Him with most service and suffering, shall hereafter be honored with the largest measures of glory. Nor will there be any thing of merit in all this. Heaven is not conferred as so much wages for so much work performed. Reward always implies a proportion between the amount of service rendered, and the amount of compensation paid. But there can be no proportion between finite service and an infinite reward. No, no: eternal life is the free and sovereign gift of God. Let superstitious Papists seek to earn heaven by their own vain and empty works; but let it be the joy and the glory of real saints, that salvation is the fruit of undeserved and matchless grace; that their title to the city above has been purchased by the meritorious

blood of their Redeemer; and that the way which conducts them to it, is paved throughout with His perfect obedience and righteousness.

The heavenly blessedness which God has thus in reserve for His people, and the modes and proportions in which He will impart it, may involve to us at present much of mystery. We see now through a glass darkly, and catch but faint and broken glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed. But when this glory shall burst on our raptured vision, and fill our souls with its rushing floods, we shall know what it is, and how it is. Then every doubt and difficulty will be solved. Then we shall see God as He is, and, with every faculty irradiated by the light of His countenance, shall know perfectly whatever is possible for creatures to know. In the mean time, let the thought of this coming glory incite us all to holy activity, not only to secure a bare title to it, but that "so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOUBTING ASSURED.

In perusing the description which has now been given of the nature and preciousness of spiritual treasures, it is probable that many a sincere but desponding Christian has been painfully distressed by the thought, that these heavenly endowments are not his own, or not his in such a degree, as to warrant him in laying claim to the hope and peace which they are fitted to inspire. It may, therefore, not be unseasonable to offer a few suggestions for the encouragement of these trembling souls.

Alas, says one, I fear I have no such treasure as has been described, for I have a very ignorant head, and, therefore, an empty heart. These treasures come in by the door of knowledge; but I know nothing yet as I ought to know. I cannot conceive aright of one truth, and how then should I have a treasure of truths?

To this I reply, that this sense of the poverty of your attainments, so far from being an evidence of the badness of your state, is, on the contrary, a token for good. Unsanctified knowledge puffeth

up with a conceit of imaginary acquisitions; but gracious souls are sensible of their defects, and feelingly lament them. David was a saint well-treasured; yet he says to God, "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." Agur was a wise and holy man; yet he confesses that he was "more brutish than any man," nay, that he had "not the understanding of a man." It is a hopeful symptom when Christians bewail their ignorance; for the lowest humility is the highest attainment. A perception of want and emptiness is a proof of the reality of your spiritual riches, and a powerful means to their increase. It is a sign thou hast profited, when thou deplorest thy lack of proficiency. Besides, you are not to determine the value and extent of your acquaintance with divine truth, by the number of truths which you know, but by the manner in which you know them, and by the estimation in which you hold them. Do you so prize the truth as to buy it at any rate, and sell it at no rate? Nay, are you willing to part with your lives rather than with truth? Has truth had efficacy in your hearts, authority over your consciences, and prevalence in your lives? Do you give up yourselves to whatever of truth you do know, and walk with God according to the light which you have received? If so, then you have a treasure both of truth and of grace. It is wonder-

ful to consider with how little light and with how much heat many saints and martyrs of God have gone straight to heaven. I say not this to soothe any in their ignorance, nor to encourage carelessness and sloth; but to quiet the doubting, disconsolate believer, who mourns over the blindness and stupidity of his mind.

But says another, How is it possible that I can have a treasure of grace, while I have such a treasure of sin? The Lord knows that my heart is even stuffed full of corruption. There is such a huge load of imperfections on my back, such a monstrous body of death, that I much fear whether I have any spiritual life at all. My sins bear me down like a torrent—lust is predominant—and how, then, can grace prevail?

I answer, it is no new thing to hear a Paul cry out from a "body of death." Living men feel the weight of a burden, but dead men are unconscious of it. Dost thou really complain of the power of sin? Then it is a tyrant, not a king in thy heart. Dost thou sigh and fight against it? Bless God for light to see it, and life to oppose it. Dost thou invoke Almighty strength to help thee to overcome it? The believer, even when vanquished, evinces his integrity by earnest cries to God. It is not a complete conquest, so long as the soul struggles with its enemy, and gives not up

the fort of the heart. Thou mayest have a large measure of inward grace, and yet feel frequent and impetuous workings of inward depravity. Grace may be strong, and corruption be strong also. God may, for wise and merciful ends, even give it a commission to make violent incursions upon thee. Consider only whether thy prayers against it are ardent, thy resistance to it vehement, and thy sorrow for it sincere and abiding. If it be thus with thee, thou mayest have, notwithstanding all thy lapses and falls, not only a principle of grace, but have it in lively and vigorous exercise. Opposites prove and illustrate each other; and though there be strong lustings of the flesh against the Spirit, yet if there be also proportionate strugglings of the Spirit against the flesh, it shows that a holy element has been infused into the soul, which shall finally gain a complete and glorious victory.

But the disconsolate Christian replies, You have spoken much concerning a treasure of comforts; yet, alas, I know not what comfort means. My poor, mourning soul is a stranger to religious joy. Surely, if I had any grace, I should have peace. But instead of this, I have been long under sadness, and harrassed with doubts and fears. How can one walk in such darkness, and still be a child of God?

To this I answer, Grace and peace are by no

means inseparable, but are often disjoined for a time, as both Scripture and experience testify. Many a true believer has been called to wade through deep spiritual sorrows. A ship may sail over a tempestuous sea to a quiet harbor. So a soul may be buffeted by fierce winds and waves, and yet reach the port of Endless Joy in safety. That a Christian may have a treasure of grace, and yet want a treasure of comfort, is evident for this reason,—that comfort is the product of God's Spirit, who acts as a sovereign, and not by necessity; and if the Spirit shine not upon the work which He has wrought in the soul, it will have no comfort, though it be full of grace. Now, for wise and righteous purposes, God does sometimes suspend the witness of His Spirit even in the hearts of those who truly love and fear Him. Hence we find some of the most eminent saints, whose names are recorded on the inspired page, as Job, David, and Heman, complaining of the want of comfort, and lamenting the hidings of God's face. Sometimes, indeed, we find the Redeemer Himself, who had an infinite treasure of grace, and on whom the Spirit was poured without measure, complaining of being forsaken by His Father, and, consequently, of the absence of joy and comfort. Do not murmur, then, O sorrowing soul, that thou art not always fed with those delights and delicacies which

are the fare of the upper table, and are reserved for a heavenly banquet. What though thou hast not always comfort in actual possession, yet thou hast a solid foundation for it. What if thou art not constantly dandled on thy Father's knee, and kissed with the kisses of his mouth; yet thou art a child still. Thou canst not deny that He sometimes visits thee with heart-solacing consolations; and thou mightest have many more such visits, if thou wert better prepared rightly to value and improve them.

Alas, says the troubled heart, if I only knew that my state were safe, I could be more content amidst the want of present comfort. But I have cause to call my whole religious character in question. When I review my past course, I find I have been so barren and unprofitable under the means of grace—so unaffected by ordinances—so uninstructed by the word and providence of God—as to leave me little hope that I have ever been taught by Him "as the truth is in Jesus." Every aspect of my condition compels me to cry out, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" Surely, if there had been any real good in my soul, it would have been more increased under the many and precious advantages which I have enjoyed.

To this I reply, that there is no Christian on

earth, who has not sad cause to complain of his misimprovement of religious privileges. Where is the man who can stand forth and say, that he has gathered from the spiritual culture bestowed on him all the harvest that he might have done? But hast thou gained nothing by thy opportunities? Has not the word, applied by the Spirit, led thee to see thy lost state as a sinner, and to embrace by faith the salvation of Jesus Christ? This I trust thou canst not deny. And since that hour of thy affiance to Christ, hast thou made no progress in the knowledge and enjoyment of Him? Examine thyself a little more strictly. Is not the Saviour more endeared to thee than at first? Do not divine things relish better with thee? Dost thou not more disregard the world, and all the preferments which it can offer thee? Upon a longer experience of the ways of God, is not thy purpose to cleave to Him in spite of all opposition, more fixed and settled? Dost thou not every day see more demonstrative reasons to confirm thee in thy choice of this better part? And let me ask thee, whether thou hast not grown downwards in humility, self-denial, hatred of sin, and love to the saints, though thou canst not say that thou hast grown upwards in faith, hope, joy, heavenly-mindedness, and communion with God? Do not expect that, in the present world, you will ever

reach a point where you will have no occasion to mourn over your want of proficiency. None attain a perfect treasure in this life. So long as you sojourn in this valley of tears, you will always have cause to complain of defects and imperfections, which God will graciously cover with the perfect righteousness of your Redeemer.

But, says the poor soul, methinks I fall very far short, not only of what I might have attained, but of what others, with the same privileges, have attained. I am outstripped by such as set out long after me. Those, whose conversion was many years subsequent to mine, have acquired a richer treasure of gifts and graces for the edification of others. Lagging thus behind, what am I to think of myself?

I answer, thou hast indeed cause to deplore thy slow progress, and to lament that thou hast not kept pace with others. There should be a holy emulation amongst Christians, and a striving which shall be richest in these good things of heaven. Nevertheless, comparing yourself with others is neither wise nor useful, unless it be to shame your negligence, and excite you to more diligent endeavors. It is not to be expected that all Christians will exhibit the same proficiency. Some have better parts, and may more quickly attain to a high degree of knowledge. Some God intends to

call out to extraordinary service or suffering; others He designs to snatch away sooner by death, and so carries forward the work of sanctification more rapidly. Besides, though many may seem to have a larger treasure than yourself, yet you do not know what they may have to do with it. They may often be in great perplexity, and find all their attainments little enough to meet the demands made on them. They may have such corruptions, temptations, afflictions, desertions, as to require and exhaust a great treasure. Possibly, too, you see only the bright side of their experience You hear their prayers, discourses, and exercises in the presence of others; but you know not their bitter griefs and mournful complaints before the Lord in secret. Could you lay your ears to their closets, you would overhear their sad sighs and lamentations for their fullness of sin, emptiness of grace, and corrupt frame of heart. Your treasure, it may be, is more settled and uniform, and theirs more floating, and you see it when the tide is high. You should take all circumstances into the account, before you judge yourself by others. Indeed, no man is competent to determine the spiritual character of another, since he can judge of it only by its outward indications; and that these are not always a certain test, is evident from the fact, that even hypocrites

may go beyond genuine saints in seeming enlargements.

But, replies the doubting believer, I fall below others in real usefulness. If I had a treasure within, methinks it would appear more to the glory of God, and the profit of men. But I do no good in my place; I cumber the ground; or if I bring forth any fruit, it is poor and stinted. While I see many around me performing eminent services for God, I make no returns, or returns so scanty as to be well nigh worthless.

To this I answer, that as in the kingdom of Christ there are diversities of gifts and operations, so all members have not the same office, and consequently not the same usefulness. Some move in a higher, some in a lower sphere. But if thou art placed in the heavenly orbit of the Church, thou hast some influence. There is not a finger or toe in the body of Christ, which has not its appointed use, or which can be spared without rendering the body imperfect. The smallest loop or pin in the spiritual tabernacle serves some necessary end, and is of some importance to the strength and completeness of the entire structure. The most prominent member of a church cannot say to the humblest, I have no need of thee. Paul, though a great apostle, stood in need of the

prayers of the meanest Christian. An iron key may sometimes open a lock which a silver one cannot. There is never a saint in the world, who knows all the good he does; nor is his usefulness fully appreciated by others, until he is taken away, and his worth made manifest by his loss. A city, a kingdom may be spared on account of the prayers and the holy example of one righteous person. Let not the higher members despise the lower, since they cannot be without them; and let not the lower envy the higher, because God appointeth every one his station, and accepts the faithful service of the most obscure as readily as that of the most distinguished. A sweeper of chimneys may honor God in his place, as well as a pastor of souls in his. A plain Christian in a leathern coat may, if faithful in his station, do God as much service as a great doctor in his purple robes. If thou be serious in the work of the Lord, thou mayest so promote His cause in thy family, and in the circle of thy connections, as to reflect a lustre on the whole church.

But alas, says the still desponding soul, I am so far from increasing my treasure, that I fear I am on the losing hand. I am spending, wasting, decreasing it by sinful practices. What I gain in a duty or ordinance, I lose by some act of neglect or

disobedience, and have much ado to recover myself. O this unstable, inconstant spirit! What shall become of me?

I answer, the case is sad, and much to be lamented; but so it is ever with the best of God's children. Thus David, in reviewing his changeful experience, says to God, "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." While we are voyaging over this stormy sea, we must expect a mariner's motion—to mount up to heaven, and go down to the depths; to have rich enjoyments, and sadder depressions, that we may know both how to want, and how to abound in spiritual comforts. Sometimes our hearts are opened to receive that grace which becomes to us a treasure; then again our hearts seem closed up, and we are in danger of shutting out divine incomes. Sometimes the sails of our souls are expanded to welcome the lively gales of the Holy Spirit; but how often are they contracted, and then we resist His blessed operations. We ought, indeed, to complain of this as our sin and shame; yet thus it must be with us here below, to make a distinction between this sublunary vale of vicissitude and mutability, and the heavenly mount of unchangeable blessedness. It should also be considered, that the believer's treasure may be maintained and even increased by this variety of conditions. By standing still,

or falling back, he may grow more humble, penitent, and self-distrustful, more circumspect and watchful, and more diligent in hastening after God, that he may make up for his delays, and recover the ground which he has lost. When a careful tradesman has wasted any thing, or missed a good bargain, he will seek to make amends by future diligence. Thus will it be with the gracious soul; so that God may overrule slips, to make a firmer standing, stumbling to produce a speedier motion forwards, and falls to occasion greater heedfulness and caution. Hast thou not, Christian, often found this true in thine own experience? Hast thou not been a gainer by thy losses? Have not these spiritual Egyptians—thine own raging corruptions—paid tribute to thee, to increase thy stock? Have not these Gibeonites been hewers of wood and drawers of water, to help thee in the service of the sanctuary? I question not but thou hast found these bitter enemies to serve as occasions, at least, for inciting thee to maintain a more careful watch over thy treasure. The Canaanites were to be to the children of Israel as pricks in their eyes, and as thorns in their sides. Just such are remaining infirmities to the saints—those pricks in their eyes make them weep more for sin, and those thorns in their sides spur them on towards the city of

refuge. There are different sorts of Christians. Some are solid, sober, regular in their spiritual exercises, and moving on with a calm, even pace in the ways of God. Others are more variable, sometimes pushing forward, and then drawing back again; yet these may be God's children, as well as the former. In some instances, this changeableness of religious experience arises from a natural inequality of temper, from a constitutional tendency to alternate excitement and depression. But whatever be its cause, these unstable souls, if sincere, are in the keeping of the same Almighty hand which sustains all the saints; and though they may not excel, yet they shall hold on their way, and be still approaching nearer to heaven, to that immutable state, where there is fullness of joy, and where rivers of pleasure flow for evermore.

CHAPTER XXI.

GENERAL EXHORTATION.

I SHALL now bring this treatise to a close, by a brief and serious appeal to several classes of persons. O that I could prevail with all to seek as their own the treasure which has been so largely opened! Methinks it should be an easy thing to persuade men to embrace a treasure; and yet how hard is it to engage them to look after a treasure for their souls! I know well what a besotted thing the carnal heart is, and how madly it fights against its own interests, and repels the grace that would confer on it eternal blessings.

One would think that they who are poor in this world would the more readily give heed to a treasure for the next. Let me beseech such to reflect on their condition and their prospects, and to let thoughts like these find place in their minds. God has placed me in a state of poverty and privation, and I work hard for a bare subsistence. I toil and drudge night and day, and yet can scarcely obtain coarse clothing and food for myself and family. I had hoped to have got something beforehand; but

I see it is in vain; times are hard; one expectation fails me after another; and I despair of materially improving my circumstances. The world is like a shadow—the more I pursue it, the further it flies from me. And have I so long been following that which I cannot overtake, and which, if I should overtake it, can do me little good, and may do me much harm? And have I, in the mean time, neglected my immortal soul, and the attainment of that only treasure which can make it rich and happy? These spiritual goods are the best that can be gained, and these may be gained, even if temporal ones are beyond my reach. And shall I, then, not only be poor in this world, but poor to all eternity? Must I live in misery here, and then pass to greater torment hereafter? O why should I be thus doubly destitute—destitute of a portion on earth, and destitute of a portion in heaven? Let me rather seek to be poor in spirit, that I may be heir to possessions better than any which this transitory world can afford. If I want bread for my body, Lord, evermore give me the bread of life for my soul, the garments of Christ's righteousness to cover my nakedness, and fine gold that I may be rich. If the meanness of my condition separates me from my neighbor, let me, Lord, be united to Thee. If I am despised by men, let my soul be owned by its Maker and Re-

deemer. And although I have not a foot of land, or a house of mine own in this world, yet give me, O give me a right to the mansions above, that at death I may enter upon the inheritance of the saints in light. Let me exhort those whose worldly circumstances are straitened, thus to reason and thus to act. If you cannot get earth, make sure of heaven, and then you have a provision ample for all emergencies, both in this life and in that which is to come. Keep up this trade of religion, when other trades decay. Live by faith; seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you; or, if any are withheld, divine grace will enable you to bear their loss, and will even render it a means of increasing your eternal riches.

Let rich men also look after a treasure above. I know well how difficult it is to persuade such as have large possessions on earth, to take any pains about an interest in heaven. It is impossible for them that trust in riches to be saved; and most rich men do trust in their riches. How apt are such to please and soothe themselves on account of their large estates! When the poor reproach them for their grinding oppressions and extortions, or when the message of God is brought home to them by some faithful minister, how ready are they to say, "Why should we care for the complaints of these

starving beggars, or the invectives of these meddling priests? We have need of nothing, and fear no man. It is a hard world, and every one must take care of himself. God has been pleased to bless us with property; we regard this as a token of His special favor, and have no doubt of its being well with us at last." Such thoughts are often working in rich men's breasts. The God of heaven knows the secret self-flatteries to which you cling; but they will all be found vain and delusive when the day of trial shall come. When the hour of death arrives, and your naked and unfurnished souls are about to launch into eternity, what good will your full coffers do you? What will you be the better for all the thousands which you have hoarded so anxiously? They may provide for you a splendid couch on which to die, a gorgeous sepulchre for your body, and a lying epitaph for your memory; but they cannot purchase a passport for your guilty spirit into the bliss of immortality. A rich sinner once exclaimed on his deathbed, "Ten thousand pounds for a good conscience!" But, alas, pardon and heaven cannot be bought with money. Peace and purity of conscience are valued at a far higher rate. They cost the infinite price of a Saviour's blood; and are not purchased, but freely given by God, in His own way, and in His own time. He was a fool that pleased him-

self with the conceit of satisfying his soul with full bags, and furnished houses, and fruitful fields. What are these as a portion for the immortal soul, which is spiritual in its nature, and can be filled only with spiritual supplies? No, no; riches profit not in the day of wrath. You cannot stop the mouth of conscience in the pangs of death with a little worldly trash. Try the efficacy of wealth in smaller things, and see whether it will remove pain, or ward off sickness and bereavement. You know it cannot. How, then, can it content, or sanctify, or save the soul? A time is coming when the careless and greedy worldling would be glad to exchange earth for heaven, and to give up all his rare commodities in order to attain salvation. But he who has made the world his God, will have no God to sustain him when he leaves the world. He who has spent his strength and time to compass his worldly ends, will, in the upshot, have only his labor for his pains. O how little will he have gained, "when God taketh away his soul!" Nay, these very treasures, for the acquisition of which he has bartered his eternal welfare, shall rise up in the judgment against him. "Your gold and silver," says the apostle James," is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." O

what a consideration is this, that a covetous man, in hoarding up his ill-gotten and ill-employed wealth, is only gathering fuel for the fire which shall torment him forever, and that his beloved minion, the world, for the sake of which he now neglects his soul, shall become an instrument to scourge him! O ye devotees of sense! think betimes, whether your great estates will form a screen between your sinful souls and God's flaming wrath at the final day. Think betimes whether you would have God or the world to stand your friend at death and in the judgment; whether you would have a heart laden with this heavenly treasure, or a conscience loaded with guilt, and filled with excruciating anguish; whether you would hear that sad word, "Woe unto you rich, for ye have received your consolation," or the joyful summons, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Remember, that you are now forewarned of these things, and that, if you disregard the admonition, it will greatly aggravate your misery hereafter.

Here I might admonish all ages and sexes to have their hearts filled with this treasure. Let me counsel you, young men, to begin the world with this stock. This alone will qualify you for all callings, places, relations, and conditions. You are

now entering upon the busy stage of life; and you know not what you may have to pass through before you reach the grave. Without the treasure of true religion, you will not be prepared rightly to act your part in any situation; with it, you will be fitted for whatever Providence may have in store for you. This will carry you through all employments, all circumstances, and all companies, with credit and profit. It will be a safe guide and guard in every part of your journey on earth. It will season your younger years with gravity, prudence, and humility; and will ripen your souls for heaven, as your bodies are ripening for the grave. O my young friends, commence life with this capital, and you shall never fail. Begin with grace, and you shall end in glory. Make it your first business to acquire the true riches, and the favor of God shall cheer and brighten all your pilgrimage, and bring you to eternal blessedness at its close.

Let the aged also be admonished to look after this treasure. Old men are addicted to hoarding. Here, then, is suitable work for you. Strive to lay up in your hearts a large fund of divine truths, graces, and experiences. In malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men. Give me leave to entreat old men and fathers, to labor to "know Him that is from the beginning." You delight much in antiquity. Here, then, is a proper object

for you to contemplate, even "the Ancient of Days." O mind not earthly toys and treasures, even the best of them. Let your hoary heads be found in the way of righteousness, your hearts filled with the fruits of righteousness, and your hands with works of piety and charity. Alas, shall you be full of years, and yet empty of grace? Shall you be drawing near the close of your lives, and still be destitute in the end? O how sad, that when you are about to take your leave of the world, you should yet have laid no foundation, and made no preparation for a better life! Alas, what will become of you? The Lord be merciful to you, and lay hands on you and pluck you "as brands out of the fire." A wicked old man is the most monstrous spectacle on earth. How unbecoming is it to hear an old man swear, to see an old man drunk, or unclean! It is, indeed, a most painful and shocking sight. Such are worse, because they should be better. The grey hair, which should be a crown of glory, is a testimony of sloth, and a monitor of approaching wrath. Ah! think it not strange, if at the great day you are placed on the left hand, since you have sought all your lives only left-hand blessings. May God awaken you to provide for eternity, before the flames of hell awaken you when there is no remedy.

Let each and all, without fail, without dallying

or delay, give diligent heed to the acquirement of this treasure. Let your souls be replenished with a store of holy thoughts. You are always thinking; the mind is never idle, but ever active and in motion. O furnish it with suitable employment! Bring some work to this mill-stone, else, as Luther says, "it will grind itself thinner," or be as a lamp that is soon extinct without a fresh supply of oil. You can neither discourse in company, nor spend your time in retirement profitably, without the treasure of genuine religion. You need it in every state of life, in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in success and disappointment, in youth and in age. This only can bear you through the world, and through death, to immortal glory.

In conclusion, I would offer a few words of advice to those precious ones, into whose bosoms the Lord hath dropped this heavenly treasure. These I would urge to bless God for it; to live up to it; to esteem it highly; to maintain and increase it; and never to part with it on any terms. In all the changing scenes through which you pass, watch narrowly, lest it be impaired, injured, or wasted. It is a greater loss to lose one grain of grace, than a mine of gold, or both the Indies. The gaining of the world cannot countervail the loss of a soul; and if your treasure be lost, your souls are lost. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go;

keep her; for she is thy life." Let all go rather than part with your treasure. Should you be called to wade through deep waters of affliction, or to encounter the stormiest waves of persecution, you must still preserve inviolate the trust which God has committed to you, and make not shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Let neither the frowns nor the smiles of the world rob or cozen you of this glorious treasure. Say with Job, "Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." Make use of your stock on all occasions. Develop and mature the seeds of grace. Bring forth much fruit. Improve your treasure for maintaining constant intercourse with God. Josephus tells us that a tumult was raised among the Jews, because their holy treasure was wasted on a conduit. But if you spend your treasure in keeping up channels of communication between God and your hearts, it will produce an increase, and preserve peace with God, and peace of conscience. Communion with God will compose all mutinous insurrections in your own breasts. Pay to Him the constant tribute of duty and obedience. Give Him the glory of all that He has done for you Sweep the temple of your hearts free from all dust and filth, and prepare a clean lodging for this hea-

venly Guest. The Holy Comforter is compared to a dove, and we know that the dove is a delicate creature, and will leave its nest when it is defiled. So will the Spirit cease to dwell in our hearts, if they are full of the rubbish and corruption of earth. Be holy, therefore, in all your thoughts, and in all manner of conversation. Learn that blessed round which Enoch took of walking with God. Solace yourselves in Him, and scorn every temptation which the world can offer, to divert your affections into another channel. Ask it what it can give as an equivalent for the loss of communion with God? Can it give pardon of sin, peace of conscience, grace here, and glory hereafter? If it say it can, believe it not; it is a vain boast, an impudent lie, like that of Satan to Christ. If it cannot, as certainly it cannot, why should you leave the substance, and embrace the shadow? O make not so mad, so suicidal a bargain! I insist the more upon this, because there is great and constant danger, lest you should be cheated out of your treasure by the world, as Sampson was beguiled by Delilah. Do not delight in the creature, lest it abate your content in God Be not afraid of afflictions that accompany godliness, for you may get a larger increase of your treasure by trouble, than by any other means. It is reported of a certain emperor, that passing by a cross upon a marble stone, and

causing it to be dug up, he found under it a large collection of gold and jewels. So do gracious souls find treasures under their crosses.

The Lord engage all your hearts to make sure of this treasure, and suitably to value it. Lock it up in the inmost closet of your souls; lay it out in ways of holiness as the Lord gives opportunity; raise your affections heavenward; do all the good you can in your several stations; sanctify the name of the Lord in all you do or receive; watch over your own spirits; be faithful unto death—and He will give you a crown of life. Impress these words of Cyprian deeply on your minds. "Thou who art enlisted and set apart to this heavenly warfare, keep incorrupt the discipline of religious virtue. Be constantly diligent in prayer or reading. Now converse with God; and now hear Him converse with thee. Let Him instruct thee by His precepts; let Him dispose of thee. Whom He makes rich no man can make poor; nor can poverty have any power over thee, when once thy breast has been satisfied with celestial delights." O blessed is the soul that has this treasure, and is mounting upwards to an everlasting inheritance in the presence of God and the Lamb!

Reader! if thou art thus endowed, favored is thy lot, beyond all power of language to express, or of thought to conceive Thou mayest be subjected

to many trials. Spiritual enemies may beset and harrass thee. Toil and difficulty and conflict may encompass thy path. Affliction may lacerate thy heart, and bereavement strip from thee every earthly joy. Want and sorrow may be thy inseparable attendants. The world may be to thee a desert, and thou mayest be called to traverse all its howling waste with weary feet and bleeding bosom. But thou carriest that within thee which can sustain thee under every burden, and bring thee in triumph through every struggle. In the possession of evangelical piety, thou hast a gem of incalculable price—the pledge of Almighty support and guidance—a light to cheer the darkest steps of thy pilgrimage—the sure passport to everlasting rest. Prize, then, above all worldly good, this celestial deposit. Cling to it as to thy life. Preserve it undiminished and untarnished. Draw from it hope and peace amidst all the storms and agitations of earth. Soon shall the season of labor and of suffering be over; and in thy Father's house on high thou shalt enjoy the abundance of those imperishable riches, of which thy treasure here is the germ and the precursor.

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THE END.

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3505 5th Avenue
Beaver Falls, PA 15010
(412) 846-2505

Oliver Heywood
(1629 - 1702)

ISBN 1-877611-04-2